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As Mary Carey experienced numerous stillbirths and deaths of her infant children, she recorded her struggles to come to terms with God's will in a diary comprised of verse and prose. She defines her reciprocal relationship with God as one nearing equality as both she and the Divine barter with children. By bearing children, Carey gains agency from her physical body as she takes in active part in defining and creating their exchange. Carey's writing invites comparison with John Donne and George Herbert, as well as female prophets active in the years of the British Interregnum. Like Donne, Herbert, and female prophets, Carey examines her personal dialogue with God, using the body to condition that dialogue. Though Carey adopts similar techniques and tropes used by metaphysical poets and female prophets, ultimately she depicts a more active role in defining her relationship to God, a role made possible by the agency she gains from the construction of her body in her text.

“DOE, AS I HAVE DONE”: MARY CAREY’S RECIPROCAL
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DIVINE

by

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Introduction - Mary Carey's Diary and the Social Context of the Seventeenth Century

The entirety of Mary Carey's writing is contained in a single diary comprised of poetry, prose dialogues, meditations, and brief autobiographical sketches. Written in the mid-seventeenth century, Carey's texts articulate the efforts of a woman attempting to reconcile herself with God after six of her nine pregnancies resulted in miscarriages or infant deaths. By embodying those attempts in a text, Carey demonstrates to her audience how the utility of her body allows the possibility of such reconciliations in the form of equal exchanges of children with God. Within that discourse, Carey portrays her agency as autonomous, and constructs her childbearing body as an instrument used to her advantage. Proclaiming that if God has thus fulfilled his will by taking her children, she remains pleased and "Compleatly happy still" ("Upon ye sight of my abortive birth..." 16). But within her acceptance and submission to God's decisions, the authority Carey's body allows her makes it possible to question His actions tentatively, asserting that because she has provided God with children, He must reciprocate magnanimously. Carey constructs a mode of reciprocity between herself and God, a mode which operates on a system of equal exchanges. Carey has no choice in the fate of her children; they die regardless of any intervention on her part. Yet Carey does have control over her acceptance of God's will. If she is to submit spiritually to His authority, he must reciprocate the gift of her children's souls with a gift of his own; that of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Carey has received little critical attention, though Donna Long has written a significant article examining Carey's use of the religious lyrical mode to examine and cope with the grief Carey experienced through successive losses of children, and a few of Carey's poems, along with brief biographical information, were included in Germaine Greer's 1988 anthology Kissing the Rod. The information we have surrounding the circumstances of Carey's life is scarce at best, though we do know that she was married twice and her second marriage, to George Payler, a paymaster for the Parliamentary forces, was the marriage that produced the trials of her motherhood expounded in her diary. Carey, who never took her second husband's name, is believed to have had one child surviving from her first marriage and two, Nat and Bethia, surviving from her second marriage (Greer 155-156). Carey depicts her days as a young woman as sinfully engaged in "carding, dice, dancing, masking, dressing, vain company, going to plays, following the fashions, and the like" ("A Dialogue Betwixt the Soul and the Body" 16), but it was during this time that she tells us it was the "Lord's pleasure to smite me with a sore sickness" (16). After her recovery, Carey tells us that God's mercy "did so win upon [her] heart" (17) that she resolved to end her erring ways and devote herself to the life of a Godly woman. From her concern throughout her diary with sin and salvation we can assume that Carey was Calvinist, especially in her depiction of what Barbara Lewalski has identified as the Calvinist belief in "man's radical sinfulness and God's overpowering grace" (14).

In constructing a relationship with God, Carey portrays an intensively private

discourse as she tries to establish the terms of her soul's redemption through the actions of her body. This discourse invites comparison with other writers whose work displays attempts to define and negotiate relationships to the divine, particularly the metaphysical poets John Donne and George Herbert and female prophets of the mid seventeenth century. Carey's writing shares themes common to Protestant writers of the religious lyric in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the influence of Donne and Herbert appears in the sexually suggestive and often violent language conveyed in the strong lines that thus emerge in her verse. Carey's discourse is rich in figurative language, and jarring, ambivalent syntax in her writing reinforce the concern with her reciprocal relationship to God as they imply an intense yet unstable interaction, writing reminiscent of Donne and Herbert.

This interaction was also at the forefront of the words and messages written and spoken by female prophets during the years leading up to and during the Interregnum, though this interaction involved not only the relationship between speaker and the divine, but it necessarily also involved the interaction between speaker and human audience. As an intermediary between God and the general public to whom they convey messages, female prophets were translators of divine messages. Herbert and Donne do occupy a similar intermediary position between God and their congregations and readers of their verse, but they do not defend their positions as Carey and female prophets do by anticipating how their audiences will receive the depiction of their relationship to God. The relationships to God depicted by Carey and female prophets could be unsettling to

early modern society in how such relationships denoted authority and autonomy to their female speakers as the public received God's Word through the words of women. Consequently, Carey and prophets employed similar strategies to deflect suspicion about the legitimacy of their words due to the indeterminacy of the boundaries between their voices and God's voice.

Also within Carey's writing, the writing of male metaphysical poets, and the textual and verbal messages of female prophets, the human body was a central focus in how a discourse with God was defined. Carey's depiction of an equal exchange with God on the basis of their "children" and her acceptance of God's will precipitated by her body's actions provide Carey with more authority and autonomy in shaping her relationship with God than female prophets, Donne, or Herbert construct for their speakers. As they search for ways to define that relationship, Donne's and Herbert's poetic voice alternates between artistic authority and spiritual subordination to the Word of God as they negotiate the source of that authority (their spiritual soul) and the corporeal body which hinders it. As Lewalski has pointed out in her definitive study of the seventeenth century religious lyric, writers such as Donne and Herbert engaged the question of "how a poet using biblical materials and models can find his own artistic stance and release his own poetic voice through these materials" (11). Donne's and Herbert's verse represents a carefully constructed self as split between the poet's authority and the acknowledgment of man's intrinsic state of sin and subordination to God. Female prophets displayed fragmentation in the construction of their identities as

well, though not between their superhuman artistic endeavors and a recognition of mankind's impaired and tarnished faculties caused by original sin, but by how the authoritative male voice of the divine was divorced from the fallible female body.

In the case of Carey, her writing displays a fragmented identity, caused in part by the authority she designates for herself in terms of a spiritual exchange with God, an exchange initiated by her body's performance of bearing children, and the problems which such authority raised. Carey's writing is situated between female prophets (as a speaker for God conscious of her female voice speaking the words of God before a collective body, whether textual or political) and Donne and Herbert (as strong lines convey her prophetic voice balancing between poetic authority and subordination before God). Yet Carey uses her body differently than prophets or metaphysical poets: in the depiction of her exchange with God, Carey's body allows her an authority unimagined by either group. Thus, her diary records a search for an identity that rests crucially not only on how she reconciles herself to God through her body's actions, but also how her body is reconciled to her voice.

Carey's writing differs from that of the male poets in how it suggests an equality between the narrator and God in terms of a symbiotic exchange, an equality absent, or at least much less pronounced, in the work of Donne and Herbert. I suggest that Carey constructs her stance of equality based on her capabilities as a woman and child-bearer; Carey manipulates and barter with her physical body in return for spiritual fulfillment from God.

In a poem reflecting on the death of her fourth child, Robert, written in December of 1650, Carey directs God to “Change with me; doe as I have done / Give me thy all; Even thy deare sonne” (“Wretten by me att the same tyme; on the death of my 4th & only Child, Robert Payler” 7-8). Proceeded in the previous stanza by the conditional phrase “But if I give my all to the[e]” (5-6), the terms of the exchange rest in mutual action on the part of both God and Carey. Carey’s imperative plea to God to change with her and do as she has done suggests that Carey feels vested with some authority in her address. Carey derives this sense of authority from her interaction with God; “Had not God spoke first to my heart in his word, it had never spoke to him in prayer” (19) Carey writes in a prose passage from “A Dialogue Betwixt the Soul and the Body.” Their respective influence on each other and acknowledgment of and response to the other’s offerings suggests a relationship nearing equality. God actively consoles Carey in her spiritual convictions and Carey gives Him, figuratively and also quite literally, a concrete voice made powerful by her reaction to it.

Though Carey clearly equates her maternal rewards and losses with an expression of God’s love and mercy, I suggest that at moments a hierarchy exists between the two as Carey’s maternal suffering is eclipsed by her desire for a physical dialogue with God. Long and other critics have predominantly used Carey’s texts to examine how the process of writing aided her in coping with the loss of a child and her numerous failures in producing live offspring. Long writes that Carey’s despair over losing her children is closely related to feelings of insufficiency in the eyes of God, and aligns Carey’s

relationship with her children as “synonymous” with her relationship to God, stating that Carey “values...God’s grace as evidenced by a living child” (126). Long recognizes the reciprocity apparent in Carey’s texts, citing that Carey’s childbearing abilities were a “gift given both to her and by her” (249), and it is this exchange that colors the depiction of God and Carey as two separate, capable entities whose relationship is finely balanced between sharp demand and tenuous submission. Yet though the theme of maternal loss is prevalent throughout her work, Carey concentrates on her relationship with God to such a level that tension inevitably results between her concern for her children on the one hand and her concern for her own salvation emerging from her repeated attempts to define her relationship with God on the other.

After miscarrying a pregnancy, Carey writes, “...God most mild / His will’s more deare to me; then any child” (“Upon ye Sight of my abortive Birth ye 31th: of December 1657” 14). Carey is undeniably distraught over her repeated failures at producing viable children and she does rely on God’s omnipotent wisdom to justify her frequent losses, and hence God is, at moments, the provider of consolation with regard to the more prominent concern of her children. Yet while stark moments of maternal suffering overtake other concerns, these moments are frequently usurped by Carey’s preoccupation in performing her duty sufficiently in the eyes of God and being granted a comparable return. After losing a child, Carey states, “That was great wisdom, goodnesse, power love praise / to my deare lord; lovely in all his wayes: / This is no lesse; ye same God hath it donne; / submits my hart, thats better than a sonne” (“Upon ye Sight of my

abortive Birth...” 8-11) Carey views her submission to God as more important than a living child, and this ambiguous line also suggests God may appreciate her submission even more than her son. The pain of losing a child, expressed in proceeding lines that describe the “little Embrio; void of life, and feature” (2) quickly fades in the fourth stanza when God is introduced into the text. Ultimately, Carey is more concerned with her personal relationship to the Divine than in the grief she does stingingly feel over the stillbirths, miscarriages, and deaths of her children.

Carey does acknowledge that God is ultimately the force she must submit to, yet a current of self-assertion runs throughout her work, intermittently placing her on an equal playing field with God. Carey writes in “A Dialogue Betwixt the Soul and the Body” that God was the one seeking reconciliation with her: “...he set himself so forth, to my apprehension, both by his word and his spirit, as a God seeking reconciliation with me, in Jesus Christ, making him mine, and all Christ’s mine, and I in Christ, his” (22). Before God and Carey embarked on their journey of taking and receiving children, they were enemies, as Carey clearly states in “A Dialogue Betwixt the Soul and Body:” “I apprehended God mine enemy formerly, but now in Christ reconciled to me. No sight of a reconciled God, but through a crucified Christ” (25). Carey clearly states that her submission to God’s will is initiated by God Himself, and without His gift of Christ bestowed upon her, no reconciliation would have been possible. Carey’s ability to choose to submit to God is made possible through the actions of her child-bearing body, and as a result, Carey depicts her body as more useful in defining the conditions of her exchange

with God. Though Carey uses similar tropes and stylistic techniques found in the work of these other writers and speakers, the exchange between Carey and God is more equal than that which is depicted by Donne, Herbert, and female prophets. Carey aspired to speak to, and for, God as she negotiated her personal relationship with Him, and her goals are thus similar to those of Donne, Herbert, and female prophets. Because of these similar goals, it is easier to approach the differences in their texts and voices based on various rhetorical constraints. Though they all attempted similar endeavors, the way in which they presented their physical bodies depended on such aspects as the genre of their communication, the audience who listened to them, and their personal role in early modern society.

Mary Carey, John Donne, and George Herbert: Divine Reciprocity and the Poet

Carey's determination to examine her relationship with God was a determination also at the forefront of the religious lyrics of John Donne and George Herbert as they examined their relationships with God. Graham Parry has shown that early in the 1600s, people commonly perceived that the world was in its last age and the return of Christ and the day of final judgement were soon approaching (67). This perception, according to Parry, was emphasized by the flurry of sermons and prophecies that viewed the Reformation as a sign that God was intervening in history to prepare the earth for the upcoming return of Christ. Such an influx of concern with the end of the world coincided with Protestant doctrine and emphasized introspective examinations before God, as

evident in the works of Carey, Donne, Herbert, and other metaphysical writers in the early to mid-seventeenth century. Helen Wilcox writes that “17th century religious poets took verbal activity to be a central vital part of understanding the divine” (12), and suggests that the religious lyric was a definitive genre invested in a “literary exploration of the self and its spiritual or material creators” as the notion of the self as an individual was emerging for the first time in the early seventeenth century (11). David Reid concurs with Wilcox as he identifies the metaphysical expression “of singularity, of individual self-consciousness” (4) and frames his study of metaphysical poets by a “theme of interiority” (10). Carey’s collection of verse and prose in her diary is indeed a record concerned with interiority as it presents the conciliation of her child-bearing body, her soul, and God.

Donne’s and Herbert’s influence on their contemporaneous and successive generations is evident in the works of such writers as Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan, and Thomas Traherne, and it is likely that such an influence would extend to female writers as well. As Maureen Quilligan has shown in her comparative study of Mary Wroth and Donne, a “disservice” is done to female contemporaries of these metaphysical writers by neglecting to situate them in a larger social context which incorporates both genders (48). Quilligan writes that “to take Wroth up as not merely of her family or gender, but of her generational cohort, promises to add something that heretofore has been missing from our sense of the dominant poets themselves, that is, the other side of the conversation” (42). In comparing Carey to Donne and Herbert, we see that which

Donne and Herbert did not: how the body before redemption could be used to facilitate a dialogue between a human speaker and God, a dialogue which could be conceived not as one-sided, but which in some ways could be equal, and furthermore that equality could stem from the bodily actions over which the speaker had autonomy in controlling.

Though Lady Mary Wroth and John Donne belonged to higher social classes and may have been acquainted through Wroth's familial ties, there is ample probability that Carey and other female writers were also influenced by Donne, as well as Herbert. We know that the anonymous female author of Eliza's Babes (1652) borrowed poetic forms from Herbert.¹ Patricia Demers has shown the correspondence between the imagery of several female poets of the mid seventeenth century (Amelia Lanyer among them), and the imagery found in Donne's verse, while Sidney Sondergard has recorded the textual dialogue existing between Anne Southwell and Donne in the early 1600s regarding marriage and family.² As these examples demonstrate, some women of the seventeenth century were well-read in the works of their male predecessors and contemporaries, both the famous and the less well known, and women were acutely aware of men's treatment of sexuality, the body, and human relationships to God.

As Quilligan succinctly asserts, studying seventeenth century women in a context unlimited by gender "will remake the history of early modern English literature" (49) and create a place for women within the male-dominated genre of the religious lyric and consequently "deghettoize them" (42). Carey's writing does invite comparison with male metaphysical writers, a group Helen Wilcox notes as only loosely defined and who may

share a “common theological or stylistic foundation” (10) but vary greatly in theme and structure. Carey’s work displays strong lines built by jarring syntax and Donnean language, a redemption-through-annihilation theme, and a preoccupation with the self’s relationship to God. The structure of Carey’s verse suggests she was intimately familiar with Donne and Herbert, and though she uses many of the same biblical tropes Donne and Herbert use, those were common to many writers of religious lyrics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³ Carey’s syntactical complexity and diction, however, suggest a specific link between her writing and that of Herbert and Donne.

Though these three writers vary in the extent to which they highlight, merely acknowledge, or avoid human agency in the circle of reciprocity with the Divine, the force of their poetic voices frequently relies on the metaphysical trope of strong lines to convey their complex spiritual experiences. In the first line of “Wretten by me att the same tyme...,” God asks for a return from Carey. “My Lord hath called for my sonne,” Carey tells us, and the mutual exchange of children has begun, an exchange continuing for years as Carey experiences successive losses of children. The first two lines - “My Lord hath called for my sonne, / My heart breathes forth thy will be done” - acknowledge God’s request for Carey’s son and her compliance with that request, and are written in iambic tetrameter. The steady iambic pattern establishes a lulling rhythm reminiscent of a beating heart, a pulsation soothing to a child regardless of age or parentage (whether human or divine). Yet that regular rhythm is disrupted in the following lines when Carey introduces the complexities of her relationship to God; “My all that mercy hath made

mine / Freely's surrendered to be thine" (3-4). A spondee on "made mine" and a trochee on "Freely's" reflect the instability in Carey's relationship to God as the beating pulse diminishes when Carey begins to contemplate the equality between herself and another parental figure as they barter with each other's children. These lines then lead into Carey's blatant statement of conditional terms surrounding her acceptance of God's will as she states, "But if I give my all to thee" (5). Though this line is curiously regular, the rest of the poem continues the theme of instability as spondees and trochees abound while Carey proposes the terms of their exchange.

In a poem commemorating the death of her 5th child, Perigrene Payler, Carey writes, "I thought my all was given before / but mercy ordered me one more; / A Perigrene; my God me sent / him back againe I doe present / as a love token; 'mongst my others," ("Wretten by me at the death of my 4th sonne and 5th Child Perigrene Payler" 1-5). The ambiguous syntactical arrangement heightened by a disorienting line break in lines 3-4 concerning the giving and taking of Perigrene again suggests a complex interplay between God and Carey. The phrase "my God me sent" could be interpreted as God initially sending Perigrene to Carey, who then returns him to the sender, or they could imply only Carey is doing the sending as she sends her Perigrene to God as yet another child he demands, suggesting that afterwards it is God's duty to return the gift with an equivalent substitution. And, interestingly, the name of the child heightens the irony of the passage as a peregrine was a hunting falcon trained to bring prey back to a master.⁴ In this sense, the master's identity is unclear: Carey's son could originally be God's son,

perhaps one that God “lent” which He is now reclaiming, or Carey could be the master wishing to find salvation not only to be closer to God, but to retake her trained bird who helped bring her the “prey” of eternal life. The ambiguity of this passage suggests that neither Carey or God can claim domination over the other by the magnitude of their complimentary exchanges.

The ambiguity apparent in the previous poem is magnified in “Upon ye Sight of my abortive Birth ye 31th: of December 1657” as Carey draws from the power of complex pronoun arrangement and grammatical disruption in her verse. In the sixth stanza of the poem, Carey writes that God’s will “In giveing; taking; stroking; striking still; / his Glorie & my good; is. his. my will:” (12-13). Not only does this passage display the duplicity of God in his actions as they oscillate between benevolence and severity, but duplicity is also suggested in the parallel of phrases between actions and the subjects performing those actions. The semi-colons (which, because of their abundance, may be used by Carey as commas) in the first phrase produce a jarring abruptness throughout the line which is amplified by the similar disjointedness in the second phrase with periods between “is,” “his,” and “my will,” exemplifying the difficulty Carey faces in aligning her will with God’s. “His” and “my” are complexly juxtaposed as the pronoun “his” is left hanging without identifying what he possesses. That is finally disclosed with the noun “will,” but not before the insertion of a period (highlighting the struggle suggested by the proceeding verbs) and “my,” which emphasizes that God’s will is affirmed only by the parallel affirmation of Carey’s will. These lines give Carey’s voice a

quality remarkably similar to Donne's and Herbert's voices when they use such phrases as the "else-immortal us" (Donne, "Holy Sonnet IX" 2) and "Let me not love thee, if I love thee not" (Herbert, "Affliction (1)" 66) where the line is disrupted by inverting word order and inserting dashes and commas to highlight differences in physical or mental states.

Reid defines "strong lines" as "expressions made arresting and difficult through abrupt or riddling syntax or of course through paradox or conceit" (4), and Carey's expressions are undoubtedly arresting through her use of ambiguous syntax. Not only do the arrangement of Carey's words call to mind Donne and Herbert, but the pervasive sense of frequent urgency and intensity of devotional longing align her with her male predecessors as well. This is particularly evident when Carey articulates her longing for Christ as the present she wishes to be returned to her in exchange for the souls of her children. Carey writes that "Christ is my all; / that I do want, can crave; or ever shall" ("Upon ye sight of my Abortive birth..." 62) and a few lines later she again expresses her desire: "It is in Christ; he's mine, and I am his;" (66). In "Wretten by me att the same tyme....," Carey writes "Tis Jesus Christ: lord I would have; / he's thine, mine all: 'tis him I crave" (9-10) and in "Wretten by me at the death of my 4th sonne....," Carey states, "To my Lord Christ; my only bless; / is, he is mine; and I am his" (7-8). These four passages demonstrate urgency and intensity behind Carey's desire to possess Christ, not only in semantic terms, but also by their fragmented and choppy construction, parallelism of phrase structure, and the tension which arises when structural pauses disrupt internal

rhyme and/or consonance.

The last passage quoted from “Wretten by me at the death of my 4th sonne...” merits closer examination in this context. The longest phrase in “To my Lord Christ; my only bless; / is, he is mine; and I am his” is only four words, and the intensity Carey’s narrator feels is manifested in the sputtering brevity of each phrase. After all, as she earlier states in prose, the happiness Christ inspired was such that “the tongue of man and angel cannot express it” (*A Dialogue betwixt the Soul and the Body* 26). As Carey stumbles over the inexpressible, she craftily arranges the phrases to mirror the reciprocity she wishes for between the divine and the human. The phrases “he is mine” and “I am his” parallel each other in syntax and simplicity, and emphasize the interchangeability between the narrator and the divine. Finally, the magnitude of emotion experienced by the narrator is expressed through various structural pauses while they simultaneously undercut the fluidity developed by internal rhyme. Particularly the enjambment between lines 7-8 with a line break between “my only bless” and “is” indicates a haltingly invasive break as it frustrates the reader’s understanding of the blessing that Carey seeks, while a consequent accent on the word “is” suggests that a simple state of being is not so easy. Even more disruptive is the insertion of a comma after “is,” separating that word from the phrase “he is mine,” hence isolating the verb and giving it powerful tension as it clings to nothing but itself. Within the pauses, the sibilance of the repetitious “s” works to overcome those disruptions just as they become more pronounced by rampant punctuation and enjambment. The breaths, or mortal biological necessities, that Carey

indicates by punctuation in her verse work against the intensity and urgency of her longing for the Divine.

Though Carey shares a concern with Donne and Herbert over their interaction with God, the relationship of careful reciprocity Carey depicts in her poetry and prose differs greatly from the reciprocity expressed by Herbert and the reciprocity disavowed by Donne. She enables herself to be compared to God by emphasizing her capability to bear children, and this thus provides a bargaining tool for Carey, who can demand an exchange with God on a basis that is unattainable, or at least un-envisioned by Donne or Herbert. Yet even if such an idea was conceptualized by Donne or Herbert, they ultimately are interested in different aspects of their sacred relationship with God than is Carey. In Donne's Holy Sonnets, Donne focuses on his own failures as perceived by himself and God, not their mutual exchanges. Herbert, though still attuned to the "self" as substantive thematic material, probes the motivations and power of God. But neither writer examines the influence exerted by the self over God and vice-versa with an intensity reached by Carey, and though Herbert iterates an exchange with God in several poems, his reciprocal acts position his self as subservient.

Robert Ellrodt's study of the metaphysical poets is particularly useful in evaluating the theme of autonomous presence before God by what he terms "self-awareness" in Donne and Herbert, a theme that simultaneously connects them to and differentiates them from Carey. Ellrodt cites Donne's devotion to God as "self-centered" (56). Ellrodt shows that Donne's concern with himself as subject pervades his poetry and

notes the “intensely personal character of his hymns and their self-centredness when he invites God to look at them” (27). Herbert’s attention, according to Ellrodt, “centered on the intercourse between God and his own soul” (56), yet this intercourse is unbalanced. Herbert seeks to discover God as he defines his boundaries in their relationship not by mutual shaping, but as sculpted by God only; Ellrodt refers to Herbert’s self-consciousness as one that is “God-orientated.” Ellrodt argues that Herbert does look to the self for examination, yet “seeks to analyze God, not himself” (48). “The self doesn’t intrude as frequently in Herbert than in Donne,” writes Ellrodt, “yet there is a critical self-awareness even in the absence of personal expression” (55). Like Donne and Herbert, Carey is interested in examining herself and her own motivations and thoughts, separate from those of God. Yet she also examines the influential intercourse existing between them, an intercourse dictated by the sacrifice and mutual exchange of Carey’s aborted, stillborn, or deceased children and God’s Christ.

Herbert writes of a reciprocal relationship between himself and God, yet unlike Carey, he does not assume that his part in the exchange is equal to God’s. Herbert’s relationship with God, though interactive and sustained by modes of give and take, is ultimately presented as hierarchical. In his poem “Redemption,” Herbert portrays the narrator as “tenant long to a rich lord” (1), the lord, of course, being God. The narrator resolves to “make a suit unto him” (3) and ask for “a new small-rented lease, and cancel th’ old” (4). After the narrator searches for his lord and eventually finds him, the lord grants his suit, then dies. Dennis Burden writes that the new lease sought in this poem

refers to the Biblical land of Canaan belonging to God, and which, with man's neglect, resulted "with the breaking of a covenant" (446-447). Burden states that in the Bible, "rights and tenures of land are established in ways that prevent injustice and provide for man's posterity and welfare, an important part of Herbert's argument in 'Redemption'" (447). Indeed the feudal tenant/lord relationship is one built on exchanges; the tenant works the land or engages in a trade to supply his lord with goods while the lord maintains and protects the tenant's home. Yet the lord and tenant exist in a social hierarchy where subservience is expected by the latter because the lord's "gift," bodily protection, is of a greater magnitude than any tactile goods produced by the tenant.

Thus, in "Redemption," Herbert establishes a clear separation between a powerful entity and a weak one unable to offer a comparable return. Analogous to their respective powers in shaping the discourse between them is their concise command of language; the tenant/poet stumbles over 11 lines of verse haphazardly searching for his Lord while the Lord resolves the poem with four words in the final line. Richard Strier traces what he calls the "direct discourse" throughout "Redemption" and recognizes that God's words come to the speaker at the end of the poem without warrant from the speaker himself. The phrase "your suit is granted" comes from God suddenly, rewarding the speaker by what he has been "misguidedly struggling to attain" (Strier 58). According to Strier, this poem emphasizes "not only the strangeness of the means of grace, but also the strange *givenness* of grace" (58). With brevity and little decorum, the naive speaker's request is satisfied by God in a way that suggests a strange simplicity because of the ease with

which God fulfills the speakers' rather momentous request. This strangeness is not merely a commentary on the perplexity and mystery of God's ways, but it is also a demonstration of God's power and the human speaker's subordination.

As in "Redemption," the speaker in Herbert's poem "The Odour. 2 Corinthians 2" is portrayed as passive witness and recorder of God's own instigation of a self-serving reciprocity whereby God receives what He Himself gives. God's grace, which Herbert represents as "breathing" is grace which Herbert explains will be returned to God after God breathes on the speaker. "This breathing would with gains by sweet'ning me / (As sweet things traffic when they meet) / Return to thee" (26-28) Herbert's speaker states. The speaker is thus only a passive observer who continues God's self-reciprocity by merely being the vessel whom God breathes upon, and afterwards God Himself reaps the sweet benefits. The speaker tells us that "this new commerce" (29) will busy him, and this statement can be interpreted in two ways: the "commerce" is in one sense the grace of God which the speaker searches for throughout The Temple, and in another sense the "commerce" could keep the speaker/writer occupied in how he is consumed with trying to capture his discourse with God on the page. Herbert's speaker doesn't help to define and condition the terms of God's self-serving reciprocity, and instead only informs the readers of his passive participation as a reflective surface from which God bounces back His sweetness to Himself.

In "Man," Herbert describes God as the builder of palaces, palaces of both the physical world and the microcosmic human body. "As the world serves us, we may serve

thee, / and both thy servants be” (53-54) states the narrator, and though his servitude before God is stimulated by reciprocity, God initiates their exchange. Herbert’s narrator begs of God to “afford us so much wit” (52) in order for man to serve Him, implying that it is from God the gift of wit must first come, though once such wit is bestowed, as we shall soon see, writers of verse are able to obtain some agency in the shaping of reciprocal intercourse with the Divine. However, as the instigator, God possesses power and the narrator is positioned beneath his master in their correspondence. This relationship of God and narrator is differently constructed in Carey’s writing; though God does occasionally initiate exchanges with Carey, such as in the “Dialogue” where He speaks to her first, Carey frequently sparks the exchange herself. In “Wretten by me att the same time...,” she gives her son to God first (though this is not her willing choice, her body nonetheless initiates the exchange), and then requests God to do the same. In this example, Carey entices God to engage in a discourse over the exchange of their children and this gives Carey more power in defining their relationship, and hence more equality in their exchange, as she determines the circumstances under which their bartering begins.

Reid writes that God is “the sole authentic centre of self” to Herbert; God is the “sole giver” and is also, consequently, a receiver as Herbert “has given up himself to put on a divine self through which God reflects himself to himself” (127). Reid also notes that a competition exists between Herbert and God, “but the upshot of this competition is always a realization of total indebtedness” (127). In comparison, God’s face in Carey’s

verse seems to amplify her own reflection and her voice reverberating off the mirror, sharpening its outline instead of diminishing it as is the case for Herbert when the divine voice frequently usurps the narrator's voice. Carey's struggle with defining her boundaries in a relationship with God could be conceived as a competition of sorts, yet her relationship with God, in terms of reciprocity, suggests an equivalency in their exchange that destabilizes the idea of God as vocal prima donna.

Herbert's narrator refers to himself as God's "poor debtor" ("The Temper (1)") whose "scores were by another paid / Who took the debt upon him" ("Love Unknown" 60-61). Though the failures of the narrator to make a comparable return to God prevail in The Temple, the narrator is able to make a feeble offering. Herbert's narrator is not able to return children to God as Carey does, which he admits in "Evensong (1)" when he states "But I have got his son, and he hath none" (8), and instead only returns "balls of wind" (14) in place of Christ. However, Herbert's narrator does manage to return more than "balls of wind;" he returns witty verbal utterances buttressed by fluency in form. As he praises God, the narrator simultaneously likens himself to God and Christ just as Carey likens herself to God as she negotiates the terms of her participation in their exchange.

Herbert continually refers to his ability to write verse as an offering to God in exchange for God's gifts: "To write a verse or two, is all the praise, / That I can raise: / Mend my estate in any ways, / Thou shalt have more" ("Praise (1)" 1-4). Herbert suggests here that his gift of praise will mirror the magnitude of God's effort in

bestowing gifts (though not in terms of relative worth), and in “Praise (2),” Herbert pledges to praise God “with my upmost art” (9). The emblem poems in The Temple praise God in theme and also structure, as Herbert writes in “The Altar” that “These stones to praise thee may not cease” (14). The “stones” of Herbert’s verses are the very praises that exalt God, cementing a commitment on Herbert’s part to attempt to promulgate God’s greatness. In “Obedience,” Herbert’s narrator states that on “this poor paper,” his heart “doth bleed / As many lines as there doth need / To pass itself and all it hath to thee. / To which I do agree, / And here present it as my special deed” (6-10). The poem itself is the gift to God, and through his lines Herbert’s narrator attempts to reciprocate, but also to increase the value of his gift exponentially by stating that one of his goals is for another man to read his verse, “thrust his heart / Into these lines” (42-43), and then be enabled to enter heaven. By helping to save the souls of potential readers, as well as boost his own standing in the eyes of God, Herbert’s narrator is, in effect, assuming a Christ-like role. Herbert’s art, the carefully crafted and witty verses which he believes have the ability to soar to heaven in an upward spiral and reach God’s ears, reflect not only his mortal talent, but also suggest that because of his unusual ability he shares something unique with Christ as both are able to converse with God, send messages to him on the behalf of others, and bolster others’ chances for spiritual salvation.

Herbert demonstrates his narrator’s likeness to Christ in the poem “The Bag,” where Christ is depicted as speaking to Herbert’s audience and who, after receiving the

“blow upon his side,” turns to his listeners and says, “If ye have anything to send or write, / (I have no bag, but here is room) / Unto my father’s hands and sight / (Believe me) it shall safely come. / That I shall mind, what you impart; Look, you may put it very near my heart” (31-36). Christ’s speech serves two purposes in Herbert’s poem: in one sense, Herbert speaks back to himself through the construction of an outside, divine voice, assuring himself and his readers that his verse, the “writing” poignantly referred to in the poem, will reach God. In another sense, Herbert aligns himself with Christ as both perform as intermediates between God and the human audience by communicating to Him on the behalf of others. In “Providence,” Herbert’s narrator writes to God that he will present “For me and all my fellows praise to thee” (26). Here, the narrator is a speaker for mankind, a role assumed by Christ in “The Bag.”

Herbert seeks this conflation of human/non-human subjects in “The Bag” as a way to emphasize how his poetic ability, in some respects, gives him the authority to participate in an intimate exchange with God. William Miller identifies the speaker in “The Bag” as one who “exudes confidence” (39) and writes that the “singular force” of the bag conceit is “a tribute to Herbert’s poetic genius.” I would suggest that Herbert takes his conceit of a bag as vehicle for divine communication even further as he implicitly compares his poetic ability with the capability of Christ to deliver messages to God; Herbert’s collection of poetry is his own bag and the sting of isolation is Herbert’s wound. Like Christ who faces the oncoming spear “all alone / Bringing nor man, nor arms, nor fear” (27-28), Herbert’s daunting task of constructing a metaphorical temple for

God is solitary, and it is Herbert's hands alone which lay the foundation, stone by stone.

In this parallel of the poet and Christ, Herbert constructs a self-complimentary tone in "The Bag" which is not interrupted by the invasion of a divine voice correcting the human speaker at the conclusion as is common in other poems. Just as the reader can conceive of Christ as "both man and God, as are we when we reach into his wound" (Miller 44), Herbert portrays the speaker's double identity as both a human son, vested with poetic suavity, and a sacred pseudo-Son with superhuman abilities to traverse the divide between the physical and spiritual worlds with Words.

Just as Carey's ability to produce children enabled her to participate in a symbiotic relationship with God, Herbert's ability to write verse at once provides him with a gift to offer God as it narrows the communicative space between them. Ultimately, however, the moments of comparable reciprocity are more fleeting in Herbert's verse than in Carey's. It is Herbert's narrator who is in constant danger of failing: "Thou art not only to perform thy part, / But also mine; as when the league was made / Thou didst at once thyself indite, / And hold my hand, while I did write" ("Assurance" 27-30). The verb "art" in the first line is emphasized by its rhyme with "part," and the subsequent reference to writing, which Herbert frequently refers to as an art in other poems, emphasizes "art" as the craft of poetic wit. If thought of as a noun, "art" suggests the narrator's ability to wring lines of verse from his mind is partially dependent on God himself (the "part" He must perform) and is not an ability solely stemming from the narrator himself. God steadies the narrator's hand as he writes his verse, indicating that

ultimately the narrator can't sustain an equal partnership in the bartering of goods and services.

Compared to Herbert, Carey's narrator is more independent within her exchange with God, though at times this independence wavers. Carey seems sensitive to the fact that the sweet babes are those "God hath given us" ("To my Most Loving and Dearly Beloved Husband"...8), yet at other times she establishes complete and sole ownership of her dead children. Referring to her fourth child, Robert Paylor, Carey states that "God hath called for my son" ("Wretten by me att the same tyme"...1), and identifies her son as "My all that mercy hath made mine / Freely's surrendered to be thine" (3-4). The repetitive use of "my" and "mine" demonstrate an ownership over her children that she can choose to submit, or not to submit, to God. She is proud to be made "Instrumental" to both "God's praise, babes blesse" ("Upon ye Sight of my abortive Birth"... 10-11), and though she is, in effect, employed by God in some way, she is not so dependent on God's assistance as is Herbert's narrator. Carey's actions of "surrendering" her children intimate a degree of subjective control which Herbert disallows his narrator.

In Herbert's "The Thanksgiving," the narrator associates wit with art and addresses God by saying, "If thou shalt give me wit, it shall appear, / If thou hast giv'n it me, 'tis here... The art of love, which I'll turn back on thee" (43-47). The narrator's ability to reciprocate God's gifts with those of poetic praise precariously rests on the actions of God Himself. Carey needs no such reliance on her God. Though her desire to strengthen her relationship with Him is strong, the terms of the exchange are negotiated

between two able parties, and are not expounded by a single bestower of children, wit, or love. In her address to God, Carey writes, “But *if* I give my all to thee” (“Wretten by me att the same tyme”... 5, italics mine), significantly showing the narrator’s autonomy because she has a choice, a choice authority as a childbearer provides her. This autonomy is considered by Herbert’s narrator at moments of seemingly autonomous poetic wit, but then rejected. Those instances are conclusively acknowledged by Herbert as possible only with God’s allowance while Carey’s acceptance and participation in the exchange relies less on such Divine allowance and more on individual authority.

Ultimately, while Carey believes her gifts secure God’s happiness and satisfy his requests, Herbert depicts his gifts of praise as failing to truly substantiate an equal exchange. In “Jordan (2),” the narrator muses over the “quaint words” and “trim invention” (3) of his poetic lines and realizes their failure to satisfy his “friend.” That “friend” responds to the narrator’s overly ornamental verse by saying, “How wide is all this long pretense! / There is in love a sweetness ready penned: / Copy out only that, and save expense” (16-18). The “sweetness ready penned” exists outside Herbert’s human narrator: that narrator is directed to partake of and use that sweetness, not to emit it himself. In this sense, the reciprocity existing between God and his subject is one created and sustained by God himself. In “The Posy,” the human narrator writes that all his clever lines are “Less than the least / Of all God’s mercies” (11-12), demonstrating that his forms of praise will never equal God’s mercy and love. Hence, the reciprocal relationship is weighted unevenly between the divine and the mortal. In contrast, Carey

and her God perform the same action of giving children to the other; Carey gives God her all and pleads with him to do the same. “Change with me; doe, as I have done / give me thy all” (“Wretten by me att the same tyme”...7-8) Carey asks of her God, which He does, to the consequent satisfaction of both parties.

The ability of Carey’s narrator to define and mold her relationship with God is an ability the narrator presented in Donne’s Holy Sonnets does not possess. In these poems, Donne’s narrator eagerly portrays his inability to shape his relationship with God because such an inability complements well the narrator’s state of helplessness and surrender before God. The narrator’s relationship to God is not reciprocal; the narrator is presented as too weak and unsteady to qualify for a system of exchange with the Divine. In “Holy Sonnet I,” Donne asks God to “repair” him immediately (1), yet offers nothing in exchange for such a request, and in “Holy Sonnet VII,” he pleads with God to “teach me how to repent” (13), yet again offers nothing in return. The narrator, feeble and unable to sustain himself from sin and unable to speed his redemption by actions or words, searches for the benevolent benefactor in his God without reciprocating. In “Holy Sonnet IX,” the narrator, acknowledging his past sins as a debt owed to God, asks God to forget them and forgo the incurred debt. “That thou remember them some claim as debt; / I think it mercy if thou wilt forget” (13-14) Donne writes, illustrating his believed inability to fulfill the proper response necessitated by his own errors. Though Donne does feel empowered enough to complain, his complaints are often silenced by the sharp sting of submission, as Donne admits that God’s wrath invokes his narrator’s “best dayes, when I

shake with fear” (“Holy Sonnet XIX” 14).

Though Herbert identifies his verse as a gift to God in their reciprocal exchange, albeit a gift that ultimately is insufficient, Donne portrays his narrator as a more passive observer to the system of receiving and giving that God Himself constructs, unable to attempt reciprocity. In “Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions,” the narrator reflects on the sickness restricting him to invalidity and portrays his physical ailments as a tool by which God glorifies himself: “though thou have beene pleased to glorifie thy self in a long exercise of my patience, with an expectation of thy declaration of thy selfe in this my sicknesse...” (454). The praise God seeks is praise that He will give to Himself as the human subject is merely the vessel through which God operates. Donne’s meditations are stimulated by physical ailments of some sort; Carey likewise experiences physical ailments in the form of pregnancy and childbirth which spur spiritual contemplations. Carey, however, depicts her ability to bear a child and withstand the “suffering before me” (“A Dialogue Betwixt the Soul and the Body” 14) as the gift she creates and presents to God in exchange for the equal return of Christ. The leverage childbirth affords Carey in her bargaining for spiritual fulfillment does not exist in Donne’s suffering: his physical travail is caused and maintained by God, and the subsequent praises God receives when the human sufferer recovers are praises stimulated by God Himself. Lewalski notes that in the context of the trope of sickness as representative of sin, “Christ is the physician and his grace or redemption is the balm or medicine which cures us” (87). As Christ is the one who diagnoses and cures, God is the one who initiates the sickness and who receives

the credit for the remedy. In effect, the human subject is not an active player in the system of reciprocity; in Donne's writing, the Divine needs no human interlocutor to satisfy its needs (though Donne does articulate them). As Donne states in "Holy Sonnet II," "O God, first I was made / *By thee, and for thee...*" (2-3 italics mine).

Unlike Donne, Carey makes the conditions of her reciprocal terms with God explicitly tenuous as they rest not only on God's will, but her acceptance of the terms as well. While Donne is merely commentator to God's self-rewarding reciprocity, Carey actively partakes in the reciprocal system by the authority she develops from her maternal capabilities. Paradoxically, the female body, a negative image of dampness and coldness in the humoral world of early modern culture, becomes the very thing that allows Carey an autonomy inconceivable to Donne. Patricia Crawford notes that because a woman's body was considered less able to expel fluids than a man, such "sponginess" led women to be more "moody, passionate, impulsive, and emotionally powerful" (26). Taking advantage of the "emotionally powerful" aspect of her gender, Carey turns a stereotype into a strategy to increase her authority in terms of her passionately strong and reciprocally fulfilling relationship with the divine.

Donne recognizes the ambiguity of a woman's less rational and sound "nature" and her crucial and somewhat autonomous role as childbearer, at least in biblical terms and with specific reference to Mary. Though men possessed reason, restraint, and physical prowess, they could not partake in the act of giving birth or the immediate ceremonies immediately surrounding the birth. The female body's ability to bear children

could foster female agency despite the pervasive ideology that women were merely their husband's appendages. In "Goodfriday 1613, Riding Westward," Donne refers to Mary as "Gods partner here, and furnish'd thus / Halfe of that Sacrifice, which ransomed us" (31-32). Donne's reference to Mary suggests that she as God's partner had an equal part in producing Christ, and who not only submitted to divine will but took in active role in producing divine product. In "Upon the Annuntiation and Passion," Donne writes of Mary as "Not fully a mother, Shee's in Orbitie, / At once Receiver and legacie" (17-18). Mary is at once the catalyst for biblical legend and the vessel for spiritual command in this passage. According to the OED, "orbitie" during this time meant not only childlessness, but also referred to the spherical path of a heavenly body. As a return upon herself, Mary fulfills a circular system of giving and receiving as she births Christ and is also reborn through him. Though in these instances Donne designates autonomy and praise to Mary throughout her childbearing capabilities as Carey designated it for her narrator, at other times Donne refers to the womb as "death itself" ("Death's Duell" 576) which he likens to a "winding sheet," propelling the soul from the dark of the uterus to ensuing bodily death which begins from the moment of physical conception.

As Donne's ideological dichotomy concerning childbirth demonstrates, early modern culture debated the agency/passivity and admiration/admonition of those who worshiped the Virgin Mother and the consequent emulation of Mary by mothers and wives. Throughout the medieval ages and into the early modern period, women emphasized the parallel existing between themselves and Mary, focusing on her agency

and active role in producing the Son of God.⁵ Frances Dolan has pointed out that although Mary was an unattainable ideal to some, “mothers might find in the Virgin a model of their own importance and influence, if not their bodily experience of intercourse, pregnancy, and labor” (283). Dolan identifies a rampant debate in early modern English culture about the “extent and value of maternal authority” (283), and a multitude of attitudes toward Mary, attitudes that were not necessarily aligned neatly with Catholic or Protestant beliefs. Carey is herself an example: though her religious beliefs align her with Calvinism, which disavowed the worship and emulation of Mary as a significant biblical figure and role model for female members of the church, she implicitly models her stance of equality with God based on her reproduction, so to speak, of Mary’s actions. Carey is an interesting case though; she uses the Mary model yet undermines the Virgin Mother by explicitly establishing a parallel between her narrator and the masculine God. Though the image of Mary was often dismissed by Protestant groups as a heretical icon, Carey’s appropriation of singularity in birthing her children, a singularity induced by the absence of references to her husband through the majority of her work, produces an ambiguous attitude toward the female autonomy some associated with Mary. That autonomy is recalled through Carey’s bodily performance in her exchange with the Divine, but Carey’s ability to produce children quickly disinherits Mary’s legacy, and instead Carey represents herself as analogous to God’s performance of giving spontaneous birth to souls. Carey never refers to her children as belonging to both she and her husband; Carey refers to them as “my sonne,” (“Wretten by me att the

same tyme...” 1), or “my dead formless babe” (Upon ye Sight...26) given to God among “my others,” (“Wretten by me at the death of my 4th sonne...5). Carey substantiates her worth by emulating Mary, yet reconfigures this paradigm of female authority by aligning her actions with those of God, an entity who doesn’t need a partner to produce souls, and not a biblical female subject.

By emphasizing their similar actions of producing children, Carey prepares and hastens her impending redemption and glorification in heaven as she directs God to recall that since her heart has been “lifted up to the[e]; / amend it Lord; & keep it still with thee” (“Upon ye sight...” 92-93). Nine stanzas earlier, Carey begs God to “Lett not my hart, (as doth my wombe) miscarrie” (74). The heart, a common trope used in the seventeenth century religious lyric,⁶ represents the soul and Carey portrays her heart as something which God already holds, but which He may release at any moment. By a reference to her wombe in parenthesis, she reminds him of the sacrifices her body has made in their reciprocal exchange of children and thus emphasizes how her unredeemed body is aiding her by cementing her glorification in heaven. Donne, however, represents his heart as being “by dejection, clay, / And by self-murder, red” (“The Litanie” 249). He begs God for the body’s redemption in heaven, but offers no way to view the unredeemed body as helping his request. For Herbert, the heart is a frequent image in his verse, and in “Praise (3),” he states: “Yet since my heart, / Though pressed, runs thin; / O that I might some other hearts convert, / And so take up at use good store” (37-40). Herbert reminds God of his “work” in converting the souls of men to God’s Word through his own verse,

and though his unredeemed body is the catalyst for this “work,” in other ways his unredeemed body and the “stubbornness” of the flesh (“Doomsday” 17) is an impediment to such endeavors.

The tension that results from the narrator’s human, fallen body and the spiritual realm which the unredeemed body cannot enter and yet which the narrator constantly seeks is a tension shared by Carey, Donne and Herbert. Within the poetic structure of her verse Carey creates tension between the physical and the ethereal, between the human breaths and aspirations for spiritual possession and fulfillment, but she also perceives self-serving utility in the fallen body as it is the very mechanism fostering her discourse with the Divine and their exchange of children. For Donne and Herbert the body is advantageous to the narrator only when redeemed after death when it can be “glorified.” Lewalski identifies death and “deadness” as a prominent metaphor for sin in seventeenth century religious lyrics, and she points out that Christ provides a model of how death can be surpassed in terms of the “regeneration and eternal life of the soul and by the resurrection of the body” (89). Thus the body after death, dislocated from earth, can be praised in its resurrection as a tool that allows closer communion with God, but the unredeemed physical body to Donne and Herbert remains an obstacle to be overcome. Lewalski suggests that Donne and Herbert “assign death a positive value in that the death of the carnal nature is a requisite to the growth and final perfecting of the regenerate life in Christ” (89). Donne and Herbert wish to leave mortality behind while Carey, though desiring an eventual spiritual union with God that necessitates the loss of the body,

focuses on how to use such inescapable physical limitations to her rhetorical advantage, limitations that ironically give her narrator more confidence and authority at times than Donne and Herbert give their narrators.

In “Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions,” Donne meditates upon the sickness that has ravaged his body and writes, “...but to cure the body, the root, the occasion of diseases, is a worke reserved for the great Phisitian, which he doth never any other way, but by glorifying these bodies in the next world”(“Med. XXII” 459). The body was a barrier for Donne, an obstacle to be overcome, a “continuall labor” (458) to the spiritual soul; he earlier asks “But for the body, how poore a wretched thing is that?” (“Devotions, Med. XVIII” 448). The pre-redeemed body does offer Donne a mode of expressing devotion to God in the sense that his sick body was a sign of sin that could be interpreted as a spiritual text of meaning, used as a dialectical tool with which to converse with God. But when death occurs, the fallen body can be tossed aside, allowing true happiness for the soul joining God in heaven. The pre-redeemed body doesn’t establish greater authority for Donne in terms of how it enables him to define his relationship to God as it does for Carey. Though both writers were concerned with “the going out, more than the coming in” (“Devotions, Med. XVIII” 447), and Carey does desire to shed mortal skin and join God, stating that after God has fulfilled his part of their reciprocal exchange, she swiftly gives Him permission to “now lett me dye” (“Wretten by me att the same tyme...” 12), the pre-redeemed body is critical for Carey in how it provides a way for her to produce children and enable the symbiotic reciprocity between herself and God.

Herbert depicts the body as something only to be transcended in death, not as a tool to be used in the structuring of his relationship to the divine. Though his poetic wit is translated through the actions from head to hand, such wit stems from God Himself, and Herbert writes, “Now I in you without a body move, / Rising and Falling with your wings” (“Church-Music” 5-6). Herbert’s “children,” the poems themselves, are possible only by God allowing Herbert to surpass physical limitations and transcend the body. According to Herbert, his soul is “pinioned with mortality, / As an entangled, hampered thing” (“The Reprisal” 63-64), demonstrating his perception that the body before redemption is not as critical in defining his relationship to God as it is for Carey. In “A Dialogue Betwixt the Soul and the Body,” the soul of Carey’s narrator speaks to her body; “Let us labor together to glorify God, whilst we abide together” (36). The partnership between the spiritual and the physical *before* death provides Carey with authority and utility as she substantiates her spiritual value to God by her ability to bear children. The body’s performance in having children allows Carey’s narrator a self-promoting tone in her discourse with God, and in the discourse directed to human readers of her text, than Donne and Herbert designate for their narrators for whom the body becomes advantageous only in its glorification after death. In the comparison between the three writers, it becomes clear that the body carries with it a variety of meanings and a variety of interpretations as to its utility and purpose; hence, the body as object of analysis was an ever-changing variable with no stable definition. Carey’s depiction of her narrator’s body encapsulates this instability as she flips the female body’s negative image

into one which gives her text spiritual authority.

The imagery that emerges from the three writers grappling with their physical presence inside constructed spiritual settings demonstrates such instability in defining and classifying the body, its different functions, and the setting appropriate to those functions. All three writers use varying degrees of sexualized and violent images to describe their relationship with God, creating a bizarre and disjarring physical interaction with Him indicative of intense emotional investment. The imagery of this interaction, however, reflects the varying degree of reciprocity Carey, Donne and Herbert explore in their writing as Donne and Herbert are physically dominated by their God to a greater extent than Carey is.

In the conclusion of her poem “Upon ye Sight of my abortive birth,” Carey pleads with God to “quicken” her, repeating that phrase five times in four stanzas. In exchange for His grace, she will return to him a gift. “It is a lovely boone I make to thee, / after thy loving Kindnesse quicken mee” (84-85) Carey writes, stating that only “after” God gives her His “loving Kindnesse” will she reciprocate with “a lovely boone.” The uncertainty of what Carey’s gift might be is magnified three lines later when the return of her gift is also uncertain, referred to as Christ’s “fruts;” “And let the Presence of thy spirit deare, / be wittnessd by his fruts; let them appear; / To & for the; love” (86-87). The fruts of Christ given to Carey could be the “quickening grace” (80) she earlier pleads for, or they could suggest viable children, especially within the context of emphatically asking God

to “quicken” her. In the seventeenth century, “quicken” meant both grace, in terms of restoring life and vigor and animating the soul to the body, and conception, specifically reaching the stage of pregnancy at which the fetus shows signs of life (OED).

(Interestingly, Herbert pleads for “quickness” in the poem “Dullness” so that he may emphatically praise God; hence, “quicken” in this context means to fill the writer not with a literal child, but wit. Though Herbert relies on the pregnancy metaphor to emphasize his passionate interaction with God, the result of that interaction is something appropriate for a writer, not a mother. Carey and Herbert thus use the verb subjectively as it reflects their desire to continue reciprocating to God with their individual gifts, children and verse respectfully.) Carey’s plea for spiritual fulfillment is thus nearly indistinguishable from a plea for sexual gratification in the form of successful pregnancies, a literal concern for Carey as a wife and mother, suggesting a passionate interaction between she and Christ.

Here, Carey draws on the tradition of the mystical marriage metaphor while simultaneously reconceiving the characters standing at the altar. The mystical marriage metaphor, which Erica Longfellow states was based on various biblical texts such as the erotic Song of Songs, likened mortal marriage between husband and wife to the relationship between Christ and the church (2). This analogy situated the human congregation as female, coalescing different genders of the community into one female representation as the bride of Christ and hence “disturbing” the notion of the individual and the community at large (Longfellow 3). This sanctified disruption between genders

allowed writers an opportunity to play within the rigid social patriarchy that defined the roles of women and men, a disruption that Carey takes advantage of to increase the authority of her textual body. Carey's passage implicitly asks God to endow her with an immaculate conception as it simultaneously begs for mortal offspring between herself and her husband. In Carey's implicit metaphorical arrangement of the relationship existing between herself and God, she fails to acknowledge the idea of community; Carey is the sole bride and as such is uniquely designated as privy to the private actions of God and Christ. Carey doesn't need the community that is crucial to the idea of Christ as spouse; her interaction with God surpasses His Son and is intensely private as a mortal marriage would be. The mystical marriage metaphor provides Carey with the opportunity to subvert condemnation as she represents her relationship to the divine as intensely erotic, as do Donne and, to a lesser extent, Herbert. In creating sexual imagery and portraying his narrator's spiritual surrender to God in terms of His physical domination, Donne must construct his narrator as passive to God's advances: Donne feminizes his narrator when dealing with God in order to emphasize the intensity of his devotion. To maintain his masculine persona would be to precariously tread on homoeroticism, while Carey, the writer, can transfer her childbearing ability to Carey, the narrator, and keep this ability at the forefront of her verse without such precariousness. Whereas Donne must often feign a transgendering of his narrator in order to structure his passionate relationship with God and Christ before their mortal audience, Carey feigns nothing and as a result she reinforces the legitimacy of her tangible body.

However, it seems that once again Carey's spiritual needs trump her quest for physical satisfaction in the form of children; she prefaces her numerous pleas for quickening with the statement, "Lett not my hart, (as doth my wombe) miscarrie; / But precious meanes received, lett it tarie" (74-78). She accepts that her womb has failed numerous times, but desperately wants to avoid the failure of her faith. The intercourse she ultimately seeks occurs between herself and God, not herself and a mortal husband. This is interestingly reflected in how "as doth my wombe" is contained within parenthesis and emphasizes that the body is secondary to the spiritual well-being of Carey's soul (her "hart"); the wombe is thus contained within the body of the line, and Carey's physical and spiritual well-being are influential on one another.⁷ A miscarrying womb is a public indication of a failed relationship with God, as Donne states in "Death's Duell" where he identifies the "highest of God's anger" as a "miscarrying wombe" (576), and this Carey desperately wants to avoid. Both Carey and Donne see failed pregnancies as a sign of a struggling relationship with God, and consequently Carey's sexual health is a public pronouncement of her faith's strength and her standing as a Godly woman.

The "quickening" interaction between Carey and God is reminiscent of Donne's Holy Sonnets, particularly "XIV." Addressing himself to God, the narrator says "Take me to you, imprison me, for I, / Except you enthrall me, never shall be free, / Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me" (12-14). Like Carey, Donne creates a scenario of religious ecstasy so passionate that it reaches a sexually charged level, demonstrating the deep intensity both narrators felt regarding their relationship with God. In "Wretten by me att

the same tyme; on the death of my 4th & only Child, Robert Payler,” Carey writes that Christ is “mine all; tis him I crave” (10). Carey’s use of the word “crave” is curiously suggestive of Donne’s notoriously erotic diction, exemplifying the heightened intensity behind Carey’s need of fulfillment that borders precariously between the physical and the spiritual.

Aside from Carey’s use of the word “crave,” there are more instances of sexualized language reminiscent of Donne, but Carey uses this language more frequently to emphasize the equal reciprocity existing between herself and God while Donne uses this language to demonstrate God’s control over his weak and mortal body. In “Upon ye sight...,” Carey identifies the intimacy between herself and God’s gift, Christ, as the “good that suteth all my whole desires” (64) and is found in their close interaction; “he’s mine, and I am his; / this union is my only happyness” (66-67). By resulting in a happy union, the possession of Carey by Christ and vice versa is a form of matrimony built by, among other things, physical rights to another person. These physical rights that Carey intimates in her verse echo Donne’s “Holy Sonnet XVIII,” where the narrator pleads for Christ to show “thy Spouse,” meaning the Church, and allow his “amorous soul” to “court thy mild Dove, / Who is most trew, and pleasing to thee, then / When she is embrac’d and open to most men” (12-14). The encounter between Donne’s speaker and the Christian church that he seeks is vividly unsettling as it places the church in a position to be taken sexually. Just as Carey pleads with God to “quicken her,” Donne seeks for spiritual fulfillment by sexual gratification; however the degree to which the bride is a

public bride (in the form of the church) or a private bride (in the form of the individual) varies. Carey seems to be less conscious of the public bride than Donne; after all, Carey focuses on her individual authority by her agency in creating and defining the discourse of power she engages in with God.

Sexually suggestive interactions with God and references to the mystical marriage metaphor, though with variations, are apparent in both writer's texts, yet Donne portrays his interactions with a degree of force and dominance that Carey does not. Donne asks God to "imprison," "enthrall," and "ravish" him, verbs that imply physical strength being used to subsume an unwilling or intimidated partner. In Carey's verse, "quicken" does not imply that the actor performing the action needs to forcefully overcome His partner, and the connotations of rape apparent in Donne's verse are not present in Carey's verse. Carey's sexual interaction with God mirrors their reciprocal exchange of equality; God doesn't appear to dominate Carey's narrator as He does to the narrator in Donne's texts.

Though Carey establishes a more equal partnership in terms of bringing forth "frute," she does portray God as a stronger power with regard to the possible violence of his non-sexualized actions toward her. Carey writes of God as "stroking; striking still" ("Upon ye Sight of my abortive Birth"...12). In her prose passage "A Dialogue Betwixt the Body and the Soul," Carey writes that the power of God is "sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing, dividing soul and body, joints and marrow, a discernor of my heart and thoughts" (19), illustrating again the violent abilities of the God she is devoted to. The frequent violence in their words, coupled with the attention each devotes to their complex

physical encounters with God, strengthens the association between Donne and Carey.

Donne says to God, “o’erthrow me, and bend / Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new” (Sonnet XIV 3-4). In terms of sexual power, Carey, who constructs her narrator’s bartering abilities with God based on her authority as a sexually active child-bearer, positions her narrator as equal in some ways to God. Yet in other terms not associated with reproductive abilities, Carey’s narrator clearly articulates the unquestioned power of God by describing the violent actions He is capable of, just as Donne’s narrator does. This is not to say that Carey and Donne do not sweetly question God’s actions at times; however, such questions are resolved by acknowledging human incompetence at being able to understand such actions and result in complete submission.

Herbert’s language in his religious verses is, at moments, similar to the passionate and violent outbursts in Carey and Donne, though Herbert’s language is slightly more reserved in its blatant depiction of God. Michael Schoenfeldt also notices the increased subtlety in Herbert as he describes Herbert’s eroticism as “at once more delicate and more deeply engrained in the divine” (263) when compared to Donne. Yet the tension between bodily passion and spiritual passion remains close to the surface of Herbert’s poems. “Lord, thou didst make me, yet though woundest me” (“Justice (1)” 2) writes Herbert as he recognizes along with Carey and Donne the duplicitous nature of God. In “Bitter-Sweet,” Herbert depicts God as one who “dost love, yet strike; / Cast down, yet help afford” (2-3), a depiction similar to Carey’s God who strokes yet also strikes. In “Love (3),” Herbert constructs a dialogue between the narrator and God, personified as

“Love.” In debating the worthiness of the narrator to sit and eat at God’s table, the narrator finally agrees with Love’s assertion that he is worthy. ““You must sit down,’ says Love, ‘and taste my meat.’ / So I did sit and eat” (17-18). Referring to the consumption of the Eucharist, Herbert intertwines suggestions of cannibalism and animalistic action as the narrator is ultimately being asked to eat the flesh of the anthropomorphic God with whom he is speaking. This passage is bizarrely passionate as the eating of one entity by another results in the quite literal intermingling of physical bodies.

Another example of entangled entities occurs in Herbert’s poem “The Bunch of Grapes,” where the narrator, referring to Christian precedents about God’s grace, creates a conceit of God’s love as wine and asks “Where’s the taste / Of mine inheritance?” (19-20). Herbert’s use of the word “taste” suggests physical pleasure or satisfaction, and when this is considered in light of the final line, which states that God is “being pressed” for the narrator’s sake as a grape would be to produce wine, yet again is the reader presented with the idea of physical bodies intermingling. Herbert’s narrator waits for the taste of God on his tongue, thus demonstrating the idea of a mortal body physically interacting with a spiritual form.

Donne suggests a similar intermingling of bodies when he writes in “Upon the Annuntiation and Passion” that his “soule eats twice, Christ hither and away” (2). Not only is his soul ascribed characteristics of physicality, but Donne emphasizes the dichotomous association between food for nourishment and devouring something for

satisfaction as the narrator desires the “treasure” (45) of Christ uncomfortably between the profane and the sacred.

Schoenfeldt writes that “love is a hunger for consumption of another, a hunger inevitably frustrated in a mortal love but fully satisfied through the Eucharist, in which Christ, like a lover, offers the meat of his body to his beloved” (261). It is through the act of eating that sexual intercourse could be represented, and Schoenfeldt points out that as such, “divinity and humanity are conjoined” (263). Whether in terms of a sexual act that results in the conception of life or in terms of digesting food which sustains life, it is necessary that God and/or Christ become a part, figuratively and in a precariously literal sense, of the various human narrators constructed by Carey, Donne and Herbert in order to maintain and validate their spiritual health. Reading the Word is not enough to preserve faith; the Word must come into contact with not only the eyes, but with arms, legs, lips, and tongues with a physical ferocity that leaves a lasting imprint. Though the implications of that interaction vary between the three writers, the entire body, whether moving to sit down and eat at God’s table or being enveloped in the embrace of intense love and what it can do (or not do) is critical in portraying the boundaries of the narrators’ relationships to the Divine.

Not only do Carey, Donne, and Herbert suggest an intense intermingling of their bodies with God or Christ at various moments in their verse and prose, but it is in this interaction that the narrator is destroyed or annihilated in some way, only to be redeemed by his or her destruction. In “Church Monuments,” Herbert likens himself to the dust and

ashes of which man's bodily elements are made and suggests that men will crumble to this, their "stem / And true descent" (17-18). The flesh God created is the same flesh that is "but the glass which holds the dust / That measures all our time, which also shall / Be crumbled into dust. Mark here below / How tame these ashes are, how free from lust, / That thou mayest fit thyself against thy fall" (20-24). Herbert asserts the possibility of redemption by recognizing the rudimentary state of existence, a state of mere dust from which God creates material bodies and which will return to ashes by disintegration in death, wherein lies the possibility of spiritual fulfillment. When Herbert's narrator dies, redemption is attainable.

Redemption is attainable at the moment of death for Donne's narrator as well. Donne writes that "death and conception in mankinde is one" ("Upon the Annunciation and Passion" 34), indicating that spiritual birth occurs after the physical body is shed. Both parts of his microcosmic body, composed of "angelic sprite" and "black sinne," are inherently corrupt because of their elemental physicality and "both parts must die" ("Holy Sonnet V" 2, 4). Carey writes that "in all I find my nothingnesse," ("Upon ye sight of my abortive Birth..." 61), echoing Donne and Herbert's paradoxical statements that death and birth are simultaneous events.

For Donne and Herbert, however, the possibility of redemption is not substantiated by the actions of their un-redeemed bodies. Carey's redemption, her act of accepting God's will, precipitates her death by her body's ability to produce children and then willingly acknowledge her exchange. In "A Dialogue Betwixt the Soul and the

Body,” Carey states that when God takes the souls of her children, her narrator’s goal is to “not only yield, but approve” (14). It is not enough for Carey’s narrator to accept God’s actions; He requires more of her than that. Her approval of God is demonstrated by her participation in a reciprocal exchange with him and it is that participation that facilitates her redemption which then allows for her death. In “Wretten by me att the same tyme...,” Carey suggests that once God has given her His Son and cemented their reciprocity based on exchanging children, He has consequently acknowledges her redemption and it is then, only then, that Carey is comfortable enough to ask for death. “Give him to me; and I’ll reply / Enoughe my lord; now let me dye” (11-12) writes Carey regarding God’s gift of Christ. Once she has the sign from God that her redemption is assured, her death becomes welcome. Unlike Donne and Herbert who rely on divine promises and hope that redemption will emerge from their annihilation, Carey goes to great lengths to ensure her redemption before her death; both God and Carey negotiate the terms of Carey’s “surrender” by participating in a physical dialogue through the utterances of their rod and womb, respectively. Carey’s “surrender” is conditional on her will and God’s will, reflecting the autonomy and individual agency her equal reciprocity with God provides her. This agency is not as apparent in Donne and Herbert’s writing since they present themselves as passive players in shaping their relationship with God; their relationship with God exists already defined and they only translate that relationship in their verse, while Carey assists God in mutually creating their interactions (of course, paradoxically they control the articulation of this relationship in verse).

Carey emphasizes the mutual creation of their reciprocal relationship by endowing words with double meanings which could plausibly come from either herself or God. This ambiguity reflects their symbiotic relationship, a relationship unlike that of Donne and Herbert who do not allow such ambiguity to arise between the various mortal and Divine interlocutors in their verse. In a passage of Carey's poem "Upon ye sight of my Abortive birth...", the rod and womb representing the divine and the narrator become conflated as Carey depicts an anthropomorphic God whom speaks to Carey's narrator, but whose words may come from Carey's mouth instead of from heaven. Both Herbert and Carey adopt a persona of God in their poetry by giving Him a voice to which their narrators respond, but Herbert clearly distinguishes between the voices without conflating his narrator's voice with God's voice to the extent Carey does. Though God and/or Christ speaking reinforces both narrators' respective abilities to participate in a reciprocal relationship with God by either giving praise in witty verse or by giving a child as an exchange for God's love, Herbert clearly distinguishes the narrator's voice from God's voice (which is often depicted as Christ's voice since, as John Savoie has noted, "Christ is God" for Herbert (58) and it is through God's son that Herbert's divine relationship is developed).

Though Herbert occasionally constructs an intervening divine voice in his poetry, Donne does not. In his Holy Sonnets and his other divine poems, the narrator always takes center stage and though the presence of God is intimated through the narrator's frequent direct addresses to Him, God never speaks. Donne's devotion is, as Robert

Ellrodt states, “self-centered” (56), and Ellrodt shows that Donne’s concern with himself as subject pervades his poetry and notes the “intensely personal character of his hymns and their self-centredness when he invites God to look at them” (27). Hence, Donne’s human narrator establishes a one-sided communion with God, unlike Herbert who incorporates God’s voice into his poetry. The blurred separation between the voice of Carey’s speaker and the voice of God does not exist in Herbert’s verse though; there is a clear separation between human and divine voices. The ambiguity in Carey’s verse suggests that an interchangeability exists between her speaker and God since either one could be speaking the same words to the other, an interchangeability that Herbert carefully avoids.

Carey assumes the authority to dictate God’s voice to her readers as conceived in her imagination, and she depicts him as speaking thus; “Thou often dost present me with dead frute; / Why should not my returns, thy presents sute: / Dead Dutys; prayers; praises thou dost bring, / affections dead; dead hart in every thinge;” (40-43). Carey ends God’s speech with the lines, “Mend now my child, & lively frute bring me; / so though advantag’d much by this wilt be;” (“Upon ye sight...” 52-53). This speech is particularly resonant in the context of reciprocity due to the ambiguity of the speaker’s identity. Carey tells us the words are spoken by God to her, but yet they are quite plausibly words she is capable of saying to God. If spoken by God, “Mend now my child” implies the child is Carey and God is wishing her recovery and renewed faith, possibly with a chance to produce a viable child. If spoken by Carey, the phrase implies the child is one of

Carey's future children whom she wishes will be successfully brought to term and survive infancy. Either God or Carey could be the possible receiver of "lively frute," as both have advantages to gain by children. It is unclear who gives and takes, illustrating an equal duty by both parties to contribute to either the other's well-being (as in the case of Carey) or to the other's glory (in the case of God). As Carey says in the prose passage "A Commemoration of the Love of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" concerning their respective gains, "God gained himself much glory, and me abundance of good, out of such a condition" (49).

In Herbert's "The Sacrifice," the narrator, representative of God, is once again Christ. He repeatedly asks the reader "Was ever grief like mine?" (4) as the poem recounts the Crucifixion. There is no doubt Christ is speaking, especially when "The Sacrifice" ends and the following poem, "The Thanksgiving," begins with the words "O King of grief!" There is an abrupt shift in speaker from one poem into the next as Herbert's speaker pointedly identifies and names Christ as the "King of grief" who spoke previously in "The Sacrifice." Another example of the solid distinction between God and the mortal speaker occurs in "The Pulley," where Herbert recounts the words of God when he "first made man" (1) and writes, "Let us (said he) pour on him all we can" (3). In both this first and third stanza of this brief poem Herbert identifies the speaker by writing "said he" in parenthesis when there is a change in voice from a human narrator to God as speaker.

Herbert marks a similar change in speaker in his poem "Dialogue," where the

narrator and God converse about God's sacrifice of Christ for all of mankind. The change in voice is represented by stanza breaks as the two voices debate the worth of man's soul, with God arguing for its worth based on the high price He paid for it with His sacrifice of Christ, and the narrator arguing that because he doesn't see God's plan clearly, he believes men's souls to be worthless. The voice of God calls the narrator "child," thus indicating the identity of each speaker, an indication which is absent in Carey's verse when God speaks because in Herbert's depiction of his relationship with God where reciprocity exists but without the symbiosis of Carey's relationship. Though the speaker in "Upon the sight of my..." does call the listener child, the context of the relationship between Carey and God of exchanging children does not allow this endearing term to signify a clear separation of human speaker and divine speaker as it does in Herbert's poetry. Instead, the term "child" in Carey's poetry heightens the ambiguity over who is speaking to whom.

In "A True Hymn," both Herbert's speaker and God participate in a written exchange of words. Herbert's speaker states that if a carefully crafted rhyme is written with sincere emotion behind the words, then it epitomizes the praise God deserves and the circle of reciprocity will continue. The final lines of the poem read, "As when th' heart says (sighing to be approved) / *O, could I love!* and stops: God writeth, *Loved*" (19-20). Not only do these lines demonstrate the desire of the speaker for a divine response, but once again God is the interlocutor, only this time not by a mode of spoken communication, but by written communication when God answers the poet with a single

word. Both Herbert and God are writing to each other, signaling that there exists a commonality between them that rests on their ability to write poetically. As Carey bases her authority in her intercourse with God on her ability to birth children, Herbert constructs his ability of writing verse as raising him to a level nearing equality with Divine entities, as both Herbert and God respond to each other in written forms and as Herbert and Christ, the Son of God, both take on similar roles of representatives of the general public before God by carrying messages to Him from general society. Marion Meilaender recognizes in Herbert's verse an existence of a "poetic partnership" that signifies Herbert's "confidence that he can communicate directly with God," but Meilaender also notices the inequality between the divine entities and Herbert's mortal speaker (39). Both Herbert and Carey show how the gifts they use in the reciprocal exchange with God are examples of commonality between themselves and the Divine, yet Carey thrusts herself into a position comparable to God based on her capabilities as a child bearer and demonstrates this equality with the conflation of her narrator's voice with God's voice. By prefacing God's written word with the phrase "God writeth," and indicating that the human heart which has been writing has stopped, Herbert clearly distinguishes between his narrator and the divine entities responding back to the narrator. The voice of Herbert's human speaker is thus never confused with God's voice since their discourse is based on the subservience of the latter whose offering in a reciprocal exchange always falls short of God's offering. Carey's offering, however, not only meets God's offering, but she is also the one who raises the stakes as she sweetly challenges

Him to reciprocate her children's souls with Christ's, a challenge subtly reinforced by the conflation of the mortal and Divine interlocutors in her verse.

Mary Carey, Female Visionaries, and the Construction of a Discourse with the Divine

Carey's attention to the actions of the body in a discourse with an anthropomorphic God and the ambiguity of who is speaking at moments within that discourse are characteristic of female prophets during the mid-seventeenth century whose mode of discourse was based on the interaction of the prophet's body with the public audience it spoke to. It was during this time when such writings, as Crawford has noted, blossomed in popularity.⁸ This protrusion of the female body into a dialectic with God suggests similarities between Carey and female prophets such as Anna Trapnel, Elinor Channel, Elizabeth Poole and Lady Eleanor Davies, who, in order to spread the word of God, had to present themselves physically before a human public. This presentation required prophets to carefully guide their audiences on how to conceive of the private female body and its foray onto the public stage, and this concern appears in Carey's work as her relationship with God rests crucially on how she presents the authority and ability of her body in producing children. Not only do female prophets and Carey speak to God in an intensely private mode and then speak for Him to a human audience, but in that dialogue with a powerful male voice the female body presents challenges which must be creatively circumvented in order to establish and legitimize the varying degrees of textual

or oratorical authority which Carey and visionaries seek.

A conflation of mortal and Divine voices is a central element in the pamphlets and messages espoused by female prophets of the mid seventeenth century, and in an analysis of this conflation striking similarities emerge between Carey and such visionaries. It is useful to situate Carey within this context since like these visionaries she undertook to interpret her personal discourse with God, a discourse closely related to the body, and to not only portray herself as speaking to Him, but simultaneously for Him. By comparing Carey to female visionaries, we can study how writers attempted to reach the same goals (to speak intimately with God and share the conversation with others as they speak for Him) while negotiating different rhetorical constraints (such as a diary versus a public speech or pamphlet). Anna Trapnel, prophesying against Cromwell in the mid 1650s, conveys her discourse with God as one of fantastic dreams which send her into trances, consequently disclosing God's message in fits of ague to mesmerized audiences in her private chambers. Shortly after Trapnel's prophesies, Elinor Channel displays her support of the monarchy in messages first iterated to her by the "audible voice" (197) of God who then teaches her "how to express" that message (198). In the late 1640s, Elizabeth Poole is witness to visions concerning the present state and future of the body politic, visions she states are "set before me" (164) which she is then charged to share with and interpret for her male listeners. Lady Eleanor Davies, who began prophesying on various matters several decades before the influx of female visionaries, tells us that she herself was not only a "partaker" of God's Word, but that she was consequently made a "publique

example” in making God’s message known to the world (146). Just as Trapnel, Channel, Poole and Davies first portray their deeply personal conversation with God and establish the existence of their intercourse with Him before they reveal the meat of His message, Carey describes at length how her soul and body engaged in a discourse with the Divine before she attempts to speak for Him in “Upon ye Sight...” where the rhetorical ambiguity of the speaker’s identity positions Carey as the mediator for God’s voice.

Just as Herbert distinguishes between the human and divine interlocutors in his poetry, female prophets also distinguished between their human voice and the voice of God which came through them. However, those voices couldn’t be as clearly separated as in Herbert’s writing since it was the female prophet who presented herself visually to a public who watched God’s voice emerge through the mortal’s mouth. This oratorical muddling is similar to the conflation of voices occurring in Carey’s writing, yet female prophets left less room for ambiguity, speaking with their own voice but stating explicitly that the words came from God. In order to be received as legitimate by the public, female prophets had to explicitly disengage their voices from their bodies by constructing a clear rhetorical division indicating when they were speaking for themselves and when they were speaking for God. How estranged their voices were from their bodies varies from one prophet to the next and this estrangement is much less pronounced in Carey’s writing. Consequently, the relationship of voice to body is demonstrated as a fluid relationship dependent on the context and aims of each writer, and the body becomes at once a tool in providing legitimacy and an obstacle to be creatively breached.

Unlike Carey, who plays with the idea of autonomous creator of words and translator of God's message merging into one, Anna Trapnel and Elizabeth Poole present a clear separation of creator and translator, depicting the body as something to be overcome by God's voice. Trapnel, prophesying against Cromwell, tells her readers that she is spoken to by God, then speaks His words to the public, and in doing so clearly identifies from whom the words originated. She uses speaker tags carefully, like "But sayes the Lord, I will make you..." (195) which emphasize that the "I" is divine and not human. Trapnel creates herself as a conduit from God to the public, disallowing any conflation of her voice with God's voice. Similarly, Poole, in a 1648 pamphlet addressed to Cromwell, states "I beseech you for the Lord's sake, whose I am, and whom I serve in the spirit, that you let not goe the Vision which I showed you concerning the cure of England, as it was presented to me" (168-169). Unlike Carey who plays with the idea of creator and translator merging into one, Poole emphasizes her passivity in her speech. "I am therefore to signify unto you..." (165) she writes, denoting agency on the divine and not herself, even though her mouth is the one that moves. The message she conveys was presented *to* her by God, while Carey's message is not bestowed upon her but is self-created.

Another visionary who spoke as passive vessel and not active agent was Elinor Channel, and whose "story" is presented to us by a male "petitioner," Arise Evans. After being refused visitation with the King, Channel and the message she carries is thus described by her relator: she "wandered up and down (the streets of London) to see if she

could get anybody to take it from her mouth, and publish it in print” (199). Literally, the message is only carried by Channel in her mouth, and she is depicted as a vessel for words that have no internal origin. She carries them as she would food, looking to regurgitate them in print and consequently freeing herself of the suffocating burden. The body is thus passive as a carrier of words, much like an egg basket or pail of water carrying food and drink.

This demonstrates how Channel, like Poole, renounced agency in order to heighten the legitimacy of their messages. Carey’s portrayal of her body’s ability to create souls worthy enough to barter with God for Christ accumulated agency instead of renouncing it, as such agency was needed by Carey to articulate her relationship with God and the conditions of her “surrender” to Divine will. Though they all undertake to convey God’s words to a wider audience and in the process threaten established patriarchal norms that often demanded woman’s silence in public, the relationship of body to voice and the relationship of the body’s performance to the subversiveness of the message is not uniform. In Channel’s “message,” divine and human voices are not conflated but the former overtakes the latter, in essence eliminating Channel’s human voice as God’s utterances fill up all the room in her mouth, paralyzing the autonomy of her tongue. Carey’s voice, however, is provided such autonomy by her body, particularly in “Upon ye sight...,” as her body is the active catalyst that provides the basis for Carey to iterate her equality with God as both are capable of bearing “frute.” Carey’s words are not merely held in her mouth, but are born in her womb.

Lady Eleanor Davies depicts a slightly more active relationship with God than Channel, Poole, or Trapnel, yet not as active a relationship with God as Carey creates. Davies is particularly interesting figure to compare with Carey because both depict more autonomy in deciding what they can and can not do with their bodies. Davies writes that “the Spirit of Prophesie falling likewise upon me... when laying aside household cares all, and no conversation with any but the Word of God” (147). Davies’ use of the word “conversation” implies two-way communication existed between herself and God to a greater extent than the other prophets, suggesting that she took more advantage of her spiritually authorized position to increase her autonomy, especially in the casting aside of her domestic duties to concentrate on speaking with God as a private confidante. The body, to Davies, allows her verbal engagement with God as she uses the physical disruption of household chores to induce her voice to speak to God and then to the public. Davies’ voice is thus her own when she interacts with God, and she does not become dumb in her discourse with the Divine as other female prophets portray themselves. Her body and voice complement each other: her body allows Davies to have time to speak with God while her speaking to God simultaneously allows the body to halt its normal activities of housewifery. Reminiscent of Carey’s depiction of God speaking to her, and of Carey speaking to God in “Upon ye sight...,” Davies hints at a more active relationship with the Divine than other prophets and their “relators” suggest, yet that agency is tempered by how her prophesy “fell” on her, implying that her acceptance of her role was passively made. Carey accepts nothing from God passively. Her reciprocal relationship

with Him is founded on her ability to negotiate their exchange of children, and her willingness to “surrender” to God freely is possible only after she is assured that redemption, and Christ, are promised to her in return.

Prophets not only emphasized the disjunction between female speakers and male voices to a greater extent than Carey, but they also presented their bodies as concrete visual aides instead of poetic images on which Carey’s writing relies. Both prophets and Carey presented their interactions with God to the public, but the modes of presentation (textual or oral) and the voices used to present those modes (their own or someone else’s) shape how the body is depicted. Though the separation of divine and human voice illustrates how prophets viewed the female body as necessarily passive in relation to a male voice in order to command attention from their intended audience, prophets used their bodies to manipulate their audience by focusing on the body as an indicator of Divine possession. Carey used her body as poetic image and as a tool to position her maternal capabilities as analogous to God’s maternal capabilities of birthing Christ. Female prophets used their bodies as concrete visual aides by not merely circulating texts which referred to their bodies and often, as Diane Purkiss has shown, their reproductive abilities, but also by making “mad spectacles of themselves” by appearing and speaking in public (140). Phyllis Mack states that the “audience of a female prophet...responded to her largely in terms of her metaphoric qualities,” as if her body was “a living text” (23-24). That “living text” was, for Carey, the image of the childbearing body in her diary.

The body did take on special significance for Carey and female prophets, but in

different ways: for the latter, the female body was a blockade to overcome, much like the pre-redeemed body (albeit a genderless one) was a blockade for Donne and Herbert. Purkiss writes that in Protestant discourses, the body “involved an unsettling saturation of the believer’s body with iconic or semiotic significance” (140). For Carey the body, though fallen, was in some ways not a blockade but a gateway which allowed the construction of her reciprocal relationship with God, which in turn established the legitimacy of Carey’s words. Female prophets perceived the body differently; though prophets could represent the female body as the positive image of a Godly woman in how it was a source of nurturing and maternal comfort, the body also had to be presented as faltering in some way in order to establish the legitimacy of the male voice emanating from it. This perception is shaped by the rhetorical roles that were being undertaken, the mode of writing which allowed such roles, and the gender norms which partly governed such roles.

In discussing the prophecy of Trapnel, Purkiss writes that because Trapnel not only published her texts, “but actually spoke them in public spaces, her body was necessarily on display” (140). Indeed, even when such public spaces were inside courtrooms or homes of friends and acquaintances, the physical symptoms of Trapnel’s spiritual fits are of prominent concern in a male “realitor’s” recounting of a particular incident occurring at Whitehall during the trial of Vavasor Powell, a Fifth Monarchist leader, in 1653. Being “seized by the Lord,” Trapnel is “carried forth in a spirit of prayer and singing,” and later “finding her natural strength going from her, she took to her bed”

(193). Trapnel spent several weeks “lying in bed with her eyes shut, and her hands seldom seem to move.” After numerous visions and having “lain in bed 11 days and 12 nights...she rose up in the morning and the same day traveled on foot from White-hall to Hackney” (197).

Trapnel’s visions and the words she utters are held in high esteem by her listeners because of the actions (or inactions) of her body. Her “relator” emphasizes her physical travail in order to legitimize her prophecies, and just as Carey’s success in full-term pregnancies was an indication of the strength of her faith, the body’s condition in Trapnel’s case was a kind of sign Mack recognizes as “visible to both oneself and to others, of the spiritual condition of the soul beneath the skin” (22). The oratorical success of Trapnel’s visions (success measured in terms of how the speaker avoided being accused of heresy by misstating the Word of God) rested on the fact that her normal physical existence had to be disrupted and replaced with a body that was impaired in some way. Only after establishing a broken body could the male voice be emitted from the female mouth, and reconciliation between the functioning female body and the its voice could only occur after the visions ceased.

Like Trapnel, Poole recounts her visions only after explicitly stating that her body was experiencing the same “distresses” that the kingdom of England was experiencing. Poole states that “the pangs of a traveling woman” were upon her and that the pangs of death felt by the “Land” were the same pangs that she felt “were oft-times panging me” (164). Just as the country was presented to Poole in one of her visions as “a woman

crooked, sick, weak and imperfect in body” (165), Poole presents her body in the same way to her audience. Again, the female body must be dysfunctional in order to allow the “masculine voice” to speak: the appearance of a healthy female body is divorced from the sounds issued from it. The cure of the nation’s body, suggests Poole, is through men’s faith in her visions. In creating the close parallel between the state of her own body and the body politic, Poole implies that her impaired physicality will be cured, and thus a reconciliation between her voice and physical appearance is possible.

Davies presents her body atypically, not by being frail or sick, but by being draped in mourning clothes after her first husband disregards her prophecies, including one forecasting his own death. Davies states that her book of prophecies was “sacrificed by my first Husbands hand, thrown into the fire, whose Doom I gave him in letters of his own name...within three years to expect the mortal blow; so put on my mourning garment from that time” (148). By dressing herself in black garments, Davies calls attention to the her abnormal physical appearance (the healthy female body interrupted by grief) and thus her prophecies are given more legitimacy before the “Servants and Friends” who watch her husband’s decline and subsequent death.

In order to allow their relationship with God as carriers of his words to emerge, prophets like Trappnel, Poole, and Davies had to showcase their bodies as impaired. Only then could they cross into public space and interrupt established gender hierarchies. Trill writes that because “it was God’s spirit, not the woman who spoke,” it would appear that the body becomes insignificant, yet in “interpreting the message and establishing its

veracity, the prophet's physical body became the locus of conflict" (43). Indeed the body was a central focus for the prophet's audience, because what they saw was the female mouth articulating God's voice, and questions about the autonomy of the individual as interlocutor between the Divine message and the public were necessarily at the forefront of the visual show put on by female visionaries.

Trill writes that because female prophets failed to adhere to proper feminine behavior, "the stability of the category of 'woman'" is problematized. According to Trill, the characteristics of that category are thus shown to be "socially constructed, rather than naturalised or universal givens" (31). The social construction of the female body is shown in the comparison of Carey and female prophets as the body was approached in different ways. This approach was shaped by the rhetorical mode of either a written diary entering a dialogue already existing between male metaphysical poets or public speech entering the vision of an audience alert to political unease. Gender norms regarding what topics a women could speak of were closely related to when and where they spoke, and all of these considerations governed depictions of the body. Female prophets spoke of political issues at a time when the threat of civil war threatened the stability of their homes, and thus they were allowed more license to venture and speak in public about these issues. Yet because they were in public, a domain typically dominated by men, they had to present their bodies as broken or impaired to be allowed entrance into this domain. The autonomy Carey creates by depicting her body's actions in an exchange with God is enclosed in the covers of a diary, a personal record written in the private sphere. Though

Carey does assume greater autonomy in shaping her relationship with God and presenting her female body as equal to the Divine in some ways, she does so in private before others and this allows her to present her body in a way that may be unsettling, but was tolerated by her readers.

The plausibility of Davies', Poole's, and Trapnel's visions was thus increased in the eyes of their audience when the female body was presented as weak, damaged, or abnormal in some way, allowing a break between the feminine form and the masculine voice coming from it. Carey, however, represented her body not as weak, damaged, or abnormal, but healthy without faltering physically or physiologically in a state of grief. Though, of course, it is the occasion of a dis-functioning body that is the impetus for Carey's writing of verse mourning her miscarriages and stillbirths. In some ways, the unhealthy body allows Carey to imagine the context of her text, but she ultimately presents the healthy body as key to an equal exchange with God and the autonomy that exchange gives her.

The functioning female body for prophets had to be construed in some way for them to undertake traditional male roles of speaking before the body politic about public issues, and which consequently subverted patriarchal norms. Trill writes that for female visionaries "the struggle to establish the 'truth' of their utterances was integrally connected to their sex; often the women themselves made reference to contemporary assumptions about their supposed 'weakness' in order to legitimise their expression" (50). It was only within this weakness, when the female body was disrupted, that God's

(masculine) message could be considered as real. Carey, however, doesn't gain legitimacy from a damaged body. Though the miscarriages she experiences do provide the impetus for her dialogue with God in "Upon ye Sight...", Carey's reciprocal relationship with God is sustained by the production of children by her healthy, childbearing body. For Carey, the properly functioning body not only co-exists with the masculine voice she constructs in her verse, but that body necessarily allows such a voice to emerge. Since the body is the source of the material which establishes Carey's equality with God in terms of what they offer each other, it is the body which in effect gives Carey the confidence and daring to conflate her voice and a Divine voice without resolving the ambiguity clearly. Only with successful pregnancies does her body align Carey with God. In "Upon ye sight...", Carey states that God's will is more important to her than then the painful loss of her children, and in the following stanza writes that "God hath gain'd one more; / To Praise him in the heavens; then was before" (15-16). Carey parallels God's gaining of another soul in heaven (the soul of her own aborted child) with the actions of God in reciprocating His Son's glory to Carey. Thus, Carey's reciprocal relationship with God, a relationship surpassing the one depicted by Donne and Herbert in terms of equality in their exchange with God, was grounded by her functioning, child-bearing body.

Thus, both Carey and female prophets displayed the body for public consumption as a text to be interpreted by an audience, yet Carey constructs the body-as-text differently than female prophets. Establishing legitimacy of their words and the Word of

God which they were conveying was thus approached differently by Carey than by her prophesying counterparts. Prophets typically stood in front of an audience, acting and speaking at the same time, often in the wild throes of communication from the Divine. The interaction of the watching public audience and the female prophet became one where physical movements were carefully analyzed. Carey's physicality was also closely analyzed, but only through the mediation of representation in words, words as metaphors. As an image then, Carey controlled what the public saw of her body. Female prophets had less control since they could not make their observers focus on what they wished to be observed. Carey's interaction with her reading public became one where her thoughts were analyzed, and this removal of Carey's narrator from direct physical confrontation with the public by the covers of her diary provided a buffer of sorts. Though differences in the rhetorical situation between Carey and prophets such as Trapnel, Poole, Channel, and Davies exist, all of these women attempted to speak for God, venturing into public spaces in order to do so, and threatening the patriarchal hierarchy of early modern society. As female prophets literally ventured into public spaces spouting their messages from God with warnings about the fate of the nation, Carey ventured into poetic dialogue circulating with male poets' depiction of God's relationship to man to establish her reciprocity with the Divine. Unlike female prophets, Carey threatens social norms and established gender hierarchies not necessarily by the physical presence of her material body on a stage, but by the *idea* of her body's abilities as comparable to those which God demonstrates. Carey's authority comes from her body itself, unlike prophets whose

authority comes from acknowledging that their ability to speak for God comes from purely outside their body.

In attempting to decipher for their audiences how their female bodies and their own words related to a divine male voice, Trapnel, Channel, Poole, Davies and Carey existed in a perpetual state of shifting identity, alert to which parts of their being they needed to assign as masculine or feminine. Such shifts in identity were not only connected to their mixing of the public and private spheres, but also to general issues which arose as the Protestant church focused on the individual's relationship to God. Inherent social unease concerning the gender of the collective church, and its male members abounded in people's perception of biblical texts, stories, and metaphors which often related the church as the bride of Christ. This would imply that the collective worshipers were female and passive in relation to their "partner." At other moments, however, Christ is the provider of milk and nourishment comparable to the role of a nursing mother, relinquishing His role as husband. Consequently, the gender of the church as a collective body alternates between male and female, and such slippery significations of gender in religious thought create what Mack identifies as "temporary liberation from rigid gender roles" (92). Purkiss writes that the "relationship between the female body of a woman prophet and the masculine voice which issued from it was always intrinsically unsettling" (141), acknowledging as Mack does that female prophets had to, in effect, negotiate this gendered space by making clear distinctions between their appearance and their sound. In making such distinctions, they divorced their mouths from

their faces, their tongues from their brains, and their chests from their lungs.

Carey negotiates herself within the same gender boundaries, and thus the diary she creates is not a diary that “could be analyzed to reveal women’s sense of identity” (76) as Crawford suggests about the genre in general. Rather, Carey’s diary records her search for a stable identity through the dismemberment of her individual parts, both in a purely physical sense and within the physical/spiritual antagonism which sought reconciliation in the symbol of the soul. Her body speaks to the soul and the soul speaks to the body: one mouth talks and one hand writes, but they are fragmented and separate. However, by projecting successful pregnancies in the future, Carey can overcome this hurdle. Carey demonstrates the search for identity involving the personal reconciliation of her fallen body and her increased agency afforded her by motherhood to subservience before God by alternating moments in her writing of the usual rhetoric of Calvinist theology where the human state is acknowledged as having “been marred almost beyond recognition by original sin” (Lewalski 15) and then moments where the actions of God Himself are questioned. In “A Dialogue Betwixt the Soul and the Body,” Carey recognizes that with regard to taking her children, “God is wise and knows it best, God is loving and therefore did it” (14), yet in later verse passages Carey questions God’s actions. In “Wretten by me at the death...,” Carey writes that if God has fulfilled his will, then she will be “pleas’d and compleatly happy still” (10). Several pages later, in “Upon ye sight...,” Carey again uses the exact phrase that she will be “pleassed, Compleatly happy still” (32) in accordance with God’s will, but then presses further with the question

“I only now desire of my sweet God / the reason why he tooke in hand his rodd?” (35-36).

This oscillation between the voice of a Godly and pious Calvinist woman and the alarming voice of a woman who rebukes the idea of unquestioning submission indicates the personal ambivalence Carey held regarding her relationship to God and the relationship Calvinist ideology proclaimed she should feel. Thus, her diary does not reveal a “self” since that self was in the process of negotiation between the personal and the public notions of correct spirituality, or the negotiation between a body with agency which can comparably reciprocate with God or a body without agency who is subsumed by God’s own system of self-reward. Just as Carey’s rhetoric records her wavering between different ideas of a what her “self” should do and think, female prophets wavered between establishing their autonomy and proclaiming their self-sacrificing of autonomy to allow the masculine, divine voice to be heard through their feminine bodies.

Though not restricted to women, as seen in the case of Donne and Herbert who are troubled by the unity or lack thereof between their unredeemed body and soul, this search to situate the self in religious horizons is important in the context of gender since it is within religion that a paradox existed for women. Women were denied rights in the public sphere which men had claimed as their domain and any intrusion by women into this domain, whether secular or religious, was “potentially a source of resentment and resistance” (Crawford 9). Yet at the same time, women did possess souls that could be saved and glorified in heaven, and were therefore equal to men’s. Women were also

charged with instilling and nourishing dominant religious thought at home in their daughters and sons, displaying some level of religious authority in private. Crawford suggests that a “Godly woman” in early modern society would be one who “had a role in promoting domestic piety” (87) and such actions of agency in the private religious arena were at odds with the agency often denied women in public.

The body for Carey and prophets, however, became public, and whether the body was represented in a text or a body as text, such representation encapsulated paradox. In Carey’s diary, she not only creates and builds upon an image of the body in her diary as a way to assert autonomy and power within her relationship to God, but she also invites public consumption of her physical body by gauging the soundness of her relationship to God by her reproductive success. But the insertion of a female body into a textual space already shaped by male predecessors required Carey to temper her appearance as did female prophets who appeared before their audiences as weak, ill, or in some other way disabled. Carey asserts her narrator’s body as more autonomous and spiritually authoritative in how she was able to take part in defining her relationship with God, but she also has to make excuses for her subversive voice with reference to the condition of her body and its actions.

In Carey’s diary, she relies on two tropes to excuse her subversive voice: a textual embodiment of the *femme covert* motif and the trope of humility, common to the writings of many women in the seventeenth century. The idea of the *femme covert* originally refers to coverture laws which, according to Amy Erickson, eclipsed “a woman’s legal

identity during marriage” and which prevented a woman’s representation in civil court independently of her husband (24). Women were thus classified by a “technical definition of [a] legal disability” which in effect “debarred them from independent legal action” (Erickson 100). Carey and female prophets, however, usurp this constraining legal doctrine and transform the male presence in their texts into a method of legitimization authorizing the creation of their work. Combined with a touch of submissive humility acknowledging poetic weakness, Carey relies on these tropes to excuse her gender. In doing so, Carey creates a distinction between her body and her gender, a distinction also evident in the writings and performances of female prophets.

First, Carey uses her husband as a legitimating patron just as female visionaries depended on male patrons once they began to enter the public stage. Mack points out that “no woman presuming to address a mixed audience on political issues could have survived without allies, either as editors, apologists, ministers, or, in a very few cases, lovers” (96). Often, female prophets’ messages were mediated through a male amanuensis, such as Arise Evans who recounts Channel’s story and the male “relator” of Trapnel’s visions. These amanuensises served as interlocutors between female prophets and their public, and thus Channel and Trapnel relied on a legitimizing male persona to present their prophecies. Carey constructs the figure of her husband to serve a similar purpose as an amanuensis of sorts, not in translating her words into his own voice, but by acting as legitimizing mediator nonetheless. Carey addresses her husband, George Payler, in the preface to her “Dialogue” and later on includes one of his poems before her own.

This address and the inclusion of his single poem allow Carey to portray her subversive reciprocal relationship to God under the cover of a textual femme covert.

“To My Most Loving and Dearly Beloved Husband George Payler” begins the preface to the prose passage of “Dialogue Betwixt the Soul and Body.” Carey pleads that her spiritual “endeavours” will be accepted by her husband, stating “Therefore my dear, I humbly present these lines to thee” (6). She addresses her husband throughout the preface, and in doing so presents to the reader a self-representation of a dutiful and loyal wife literally embodying the femme covert: “God hath also made us of one mind, our judgments are one, our wills, our aims in spirituals...” (9). This blatant depiction of a sole figure representing both husband and wife provides Carey with greater authority as her female body is thus authorized by the male head of her household. Carey is possessed by him, and the possession Carey constructs emphasizes the legitimacy of Carey’s textual ambitions: “I shall now, my dear, beg thy watchfulness over me, against sin, and thy prayers for me” (10). Carey’s husband does indeed watch over Carey’s words quite literally as his eyes are embedded in Carey’s words themselves.

Though Carey emphasizes the importance of her husband’s guardianship over her text in the preface, she does not mention or refer to him throughout the “Dialogue,” nor in any other prose or verse passage. She does include one poem that she states is authored by her husband, but doesn’t refer to this poem again. These isolated references to her husband rely on his voice and image only by how they precipitate Carey’s subversive depiction of her reciprocal relationship with God. Her husband’s authorizing presence

helps to create the narrator's persona as a good wife and mother who is attempting to perform her duty of maintaining and revering domestic space even in a text that ventured outside of such a space.

Not only does Carey embody the femme covert trope in her writing, but she also employs the trope of humility as an excuse for her boldness in writing a text that would raise the eyebrows of her contemporaries. The lines she "humbly presents" to her husband, lines which she wishes had "power to express my affection further than I can" (8). Like Carey, female prophets (as well as many other contemporaneous female writers in general) often expressed humility in their messages from God. Elinor Channel's "relator" tells of how she is "but a weak woman in expression (but) was taught in brief how to express her message from God..." (198). In both examples, the boldness of the writer/speaker must be excused with humility even as that boldness acted as the initial impetus for their words.

The recurring theme of the femme covert, which protected and masked women by men in their texts as well as in the political/economic sphere of public discourse, and the trope of humility are used by both Carey and female prophets as ways to justify their bodily disruption of gender hierarchy. Whether using the image of the body as thematic tool or using the tangible flesh and blood spectacle of speaking and acting before an audience, Carey and visionaries (and their male interlocutors, as the case may be) acknowledged their weaknesses as necessary in order to circumvent the very norms they threatened. Mack plays with the idea of self-conscious irony constructed in women's

writing, asking if such behavior implied “that *men* were the victims of cold-blooded manipulation by *women*, who consciously used traditional language and behavior as a covert strategy of self-expression?” (111). Mack then answers in the negative, stating that women’s feelings of inadequacy may have often been genuine. In Carey’s case, however, the failure to refer to her husband even one time after her preface and the inclusion his single poem suggests that though this may not have been “cold-blooded manipulation,” Carey at least felt it unnecessary to continue the tropes of humility and the passive femme covert after her initial concession to them. Feelings of inadequacy may have existed for Carey, but the formulaic structure of iterating female passiveness and frailty by utilizing these tropes and then neglecting to use them in later passages suggests such feelings, if they existed, did not run deeply. Thus, these tropes were strategically and carefully used by Carey not as substantive material for her diary, but as a way to excuse the substantive material which centered on her definition of her relationship to God.

Yet even though Carey and female prophets both employed these tropes throughout their writing, female prophets anticipated their audience’s reception of their message differently than did Carey. Within the carefully conceived paradox of tactical self-lowering in order to rise above gendered expectations of authorship and ensure their readers that they possessed authority and legitimacy from the Divine, female prophets often constructed a direct warning to their readers: an insult against them, as speakers of God’s Word, was an insult to God himself. Carey doesn’t warn her audience directly about not perceiving her words as authoritative. Instead, she directs her body to follow

suit from her soul and in this way, she speaks to the audience through her soul's direction to her body. Using a constructed discourse between her soul and her body as a conduit to convey a message, just as female prophets did on the public stage, Carey demonstrates to the readers what will and what will not happen if they disregard her message that is divinely ordained as she attempts to console her body to enter into God's grace through submission to His will. In "A Dialogue...", Carey sweetly alerts her body that it is of crucial importance to follow the example led by her soul. In "A Dialogue...", the soul gains authority from its trials and tribulations with God which, the soul tells us, "by experience I know true" (29). Carey writes, "Let thee and I, my dear Body, all the members, all the faculties, even the whole man give up ourselves unto God, our good God, into his service..." (35-36) and directs the soul to its material counterpart, suggesting that the body must heed the soul's words as a role model for behavior. In such emulation of the soul, the body will be able to "enjoy God, and Christ, and the Spirit for ever" (37). The body of Carey's soul thus stands in for the body of the reader, a reader who must heed Carey's depiction of how to interact successfully with God through the example she constructs in her text. Using encouragement instead of warning, Carey appropriately focuses on her body's response to God's actions.

Female prophets, on the other hand, relied on severe warnings, not encouragement or enticement to keep their readers doubt free of their authority as true vessels of God's word. In one of her pamphlets, Davies demonstrates that to insult her prophecies by disregarding or admonishing them as corrupt or insincere can produce serious

repercussions. Davies maintained a record of her visions in what she refers to a “this Book of mine.” Her first husband, disbelieving her visions, seized her book and threw it “into the fire” (148). Davies consequently prophesies his death with the next three years, a death that she tells us came to pass accordingly. Shortly afterwards, Davies had the unfortunate luck to marry another man who performed the same action. Davies tells us that “he likewise burning my book, another manuscript” managed to escape “not scot free” (148) from the wrath of the Divine whom she spoke for. This example illustrates, quite explicitly, how Davies uses the examples of her husbands to warn her audience to take her visions very seriously.

In a similar way, Trapnel in “The Cry of a Stone,” addresses her audience by telling them that if they refuse to listen to God’s word through Trapnel’s speech, or refuse to acknowledge the “voyce within a voyce” (G1v) as Trapnel refers to it, then the consequences could be dire. “The Lord would have your Protestations, Vows, Covenants, and Narrations brought into your palace against you, this shall be bitterness in your dishes; you shall have plenty and fulness, but without comfort” (K3v) Trapnel states, connecting her audience’s failure to recognize her divine authority with punishment, a punishment represented here in metaphorical terms as gastronomical dissatisfaction.

In both Carey’s writing and the visions expounded by female prophets and/or their amanuensis, a man couldn’t be too far away; after all, the body was dangerous to these women when it was on display for the public to feast their eyes on, whether figuratively or literally, and the security a male presence offered was important to a

work's reception. Despite the shared methods of anticipating and defending their work from critics, female prophets represented themselves as more passivity physically than Carey represents herself. Carey is hindered by her gender (as demonstrated by the defensive tropes she employs) but her bodily autonomy in producing children helps her much more than the bodies of prophets, bodies that not only had to be separated from voices and genders, but had to be defeated or displaced a step farther in order to allow the voice to be heard. Thus, Carey's distinction between her body and gender emphasizes greater bodily autonomy as it can birth children, which then places Carey in a position to barter with God.

Channel's relator states that "inwardly though she be but a weak woman in expression, she was taught in brief how to express her message from God to your highness" (198). Though Carey identifies how difficult it was to express God's power and mercy, she was not taught by Him how to overcome the inexpressible; she was motivated perhaps, but her ability to express her thoughts is not given to her from any higher power. Carey's words are created in negotiations between herself and God, indicating Carey's greater autonomy in that she can barter with Him and in the process verbally interact as a separate discursive subject. Channel's relator states that "when she is Dumb, all her senses are taken up," and her visions are "dictated and made plain to her by the Spirit of God" (199). This depiction of Channel as a manipulated and passive subject is distinctly different from Carey's self-depiction as narrator who questions God's actions and contemplates her submission to His will. This contemplation is allowed only

by the authoritative space Carey creates for herself by establishing a reciprocal relationship to God nearing equality.

Carey's contemplation and interrogation of God's actions is absent from Anna Trapnel's writing just as it is absent from Channel's messages. Trapnel writes, "Oh Lord, thy servant knows there is no selfe in this thing" (G1v), thus claiming complete detachment of her person (her gender) from her bodily actions and speech as Carey does, but in Trapnel's depiction of this detachment, her body mimics a male body because it is God's assuredly male voice emanating from her mouth in a public space. Trapnel identifies herself as a servant whom God has "over-ruled" and who has "put...to silence" (G1v). Carey's moments of silence are scarce, and the one passage in "Upon ye sight of my Aborted Birth" where God is the supposed interlocutor in the poem is overshadowed by the sneaking suspicion that the voice is an echo of Carey's own voice, since the words He speaks could make sense coming from Carey's mouth just as easily as from His own. This autonomy Carey demonstrates is recognized by Mack as being absent from the words of female prophets. Mack writes that the female prophet, unable to rely on "individual capacities" in order to justify her authority, instead "invited her audience to contemplate her as the literal embodiment of a feminine archetype" (23). Mack cites Davies' use of the terms "vessel, handmaid, or bride" to represent herself, and Trapnel uses similar terms as well, identifying herself as a "vessel" to be filled with liquor, a "poor handmaid," and a "servant" throughout her writings. Carey identifies herself as a "Child by mercy free" ("Upon ye sight..." 68), and though she does refer to herself as

God's handmaid, she follows that self-definition with a question of God's very authority. In "Upon ye sight....," Carey writes that she is God's "hand-maide" (33) but immediately follows this in the next stanza with "I only now desire of my sweet God / the reason why he tooke in hand his rodd?" (34-35).

Carey's defiance exists because she makes a distinction between her body and her gender, just as prophets were tolerated by the public because they separated their body and gender. Yet, this distinction crumbles at other times in both Carey's and prophets' writing and speaking. Within the distinction of body and gender, Carey constructs a more active body than female prophets, but in conveying God's words to their readers they all relied on symbols of pregnancy and maternal nurturing to convince the public of their legitimacy. Thus, in order to establish their credibility while thwarting patriarchal norms which disallowed women a voice in public, they had to acknowledge and utilize the duties of mothers and nurturers securely nestled in traditional gender roles, an aspect of their rhetorical strategy antagonistic to other moments when prophets and Carey divorce their gendered weaknesses from the actions of their bodies. This antagonism emerges from Carey's writing and prophets' messages as these women struggled with portraying their private bodies in public spaces. As Mack states, the prophet's only way of legitimizing herself in the public eye was "to present herself as a defender of the natural order in which she was subservient while simultaneously affirming that she had transcended that natural order" (108). The search for identity stimulates this antagonism between body and gender as Carey and other women tried to unite their social roles with

their individual ambitions and goals. At times, then, as a plea to be accepted with authority and legitimacy within the public sphere of politics or textual and theological discourse, female writers distinguished between their gender and their body. At other times this rift between gender and body was erased in order to gain legitimacy. The conflicting ideologies need not be reconciled; instead, they should be viewed as a signifier of women searching for identity through the fragmented mirror in which they, and others viewed themselves.

We have already seen Carey's advantageous use of pregnancy imagery, but her symbolism of childbirth was ironically also literal, since she derives power from the very real births, and losses, of children. Female prophets, though they may have, and did, experience births and losses of children, only portray figurative births in their messages and visions, births usually of their divine insight and powerful knowledge, not real children. Symbolic images and intimations of birthing and nurturing remained only that - metaphors. For Carey, birthing children was the literal embodiment of her justification for subversiveness.

Poole uses the imagery of a woman suffering from birthing pains in order to illustrate how well she understood the political state of England which further developed her legitimacy. She states that she was "made sensible of the distresses of the Land" by having the "pangs of a travelling woman...upon me" (164), the same pangs found in the feminized "Land" who was then in a "dying state." Not only does Poole address her geographical prowess by traveling over the country with her all-knowing divine eye, but

she also asserts that because of her voyeuristic and empathetic abilities allowed her by being a prophet and a woman, she is able to conceive knowledge of a greater thoroughness than her public (male) audience. Crawford points out that in “A Prophesie,” Poole refers to herself as “pregnant with the divine, of her message as ‘the Babe Jesus within me’” (109). Poole portrays herself as pregnant, but not with a mortal child, thus sealing off the possibility of literal reference Carey invokes.

Pregnancy was often not referred to directly, however, but through indirect association with the mother/child relationship. Mack writes that many woman “all saw, and were taught to see, moral and spiritual significance in childbirth and the mother/child relationship” (93). Eleanor Davies, for example, illustrates her legitimacy in such a way. She tells of how she takes in George Carr, a mute boy of thirteen years who was himself endowed with visionary capabilities. Not only does she demonstrate the truth of visionaries by providing numerous examples of the boys psychic abilities, but by showcasing the quasi-maternal role she undertakes, Davies emphasizes her moral purity in taking care of a boy many thought was simply lying or mentally disturbed. And that purity was apparently noticed by God, who endowed Davies with the “Spirit of Prophesie” (147) falling upon her in the midst of her ardent defenses of the boy from “doubting Justices of Peace and Church-men.” Davies tells us that these visions began right after she began “providing for that aforesaid admired guest, bit adorned him almost; how afterward it came to pass, like the least of all seeds, how it sprang up, as follows...” (147). Continuing on to describe the visions themselves, Davies emphasizes the

connection between her maternal nature and the birth of her prophesies.

This connection is an example of what Purkiss identifies as a maternal metaphor where there is “an underlying linkage between female reproduction and the production of the Word of God” (153). Taken a step farther, Purkiss states that this “figures the transmission of the Word in prophecy as female reproduction” (153), and indeed both Davies and Poole exemplify this connection through the symbolic imagery childbirth affords them. Channel’s relator expresses this connection in his text by making sure to inform the reader that Channel “hath many small children, three of them very young ones” (198) who weigh on her mind so heavily that she is unable to sleep, and is so exhausted at times that she is made “speechless.” Her maternal worries, coupled with the visions flooding her mind, produce a “restless condition” which can only be alleviated through expressing her mind to the king (198). Though the children are real, they are still only used symbolically in the text to heighten the urgency of Channel’s much needed prophetic release. She must share her visions to be rid of them, and this release will purge her worries from her body. Carey’s children and the literal expulsion of them from her body provides her with the chance to speak with, and for, God. Carey shares her children with God and with the reader of her diary as they trace Carey’s numerous experiences with birth and loss, and these literal “visions” are shared by Carey in an effort to establish and sustain her greater autonomy and authority in a discourse with God.

Conclusion

Carey thus used the imagery of children not only in a figurative sense as signifiers of God's blessing and Carey's spiritual well-being, but the miscarriages and deaths of her children were also the literal impetus for her writing. Carey constructed the very real loss of her children as a way for her to gain bargaining power with God as she defined why and how her redemption should occur. Carey suggests that if she submits to God's will, the giving of her children allows her request for redemption through Christ, saying that if she gives her "all," God should then not let her "pyne for poverty" (Wretten by me att the same tyme...5-6). Though Carey has not the power to control the death of her children, she does use their deaths strategically by recognizing that their souls, the fruits that God Himself desires, can be used in a way which lends her agency in shaping a discourse with the Divine.

Whereas female prophets used pregnancy imagery and the image of children to foster the image of a Godly wife and mother, even as they disrupted such roles as they spoke to and for God outside their proper domestic space, Carey does not figuratively use children to emphasize her domestic legitimacy as wife and mother. Carey's literal children were used to establish and sustain increased autonomy and agency in defining her relationship with God, a relationship in which Carey neared equality with Him by bartering with the same goods. Female prophets, on the other hand, used the image of children to counteract such autonomy and agency that was necessarily involved as they stood up to speak for God in front of a general public.

Female prophets such as Poole, Davies, and Channel took advantage not only of the imagery of children to showcase themselves as wives and mothers, but they also used the image of giving birth and reproducing God's word as metaphors to emphasize such roles. As female prophets represented their messages in such a way, Donne and Herbert similarly represented their texts as metaphorical children, as did other writers,⁹ though not with the purpose of establishing themselves in a particular role but to establish the importance of their texts as an intimate offering to God. Like Carey, Herbert and Donne offer their "children" to God, but unlike Carey they do not tenderly demand a comparable return. In Herbert's dedication to his reader which prefaces The Temple, he refers to his verse as his "first fruits" (5) which he presents to God. Lewalski has observed that a central metaphor frequently used in religious lyrics is that whereby the Christian himself is an "object of God's husbandry and also a sharer in it," (97) and this metaphor commonly relies on images of fruits, vines, seeds, and other botanical aspects of growth. References to fruit were therefore imbued with connotations of birthing, nurturing and cultivating souls, which is what a parent would do to a child just as God does in an analogous sense to his flock of mankind. Herbert's "children," however, are not bartered with; he offers them unconditionally, recognizing that he possesses no ownership over them. In addressing God, Herbert refers to his fruits with the possessive pronoun "my," but abruptly negates such possession when he states that they are "Yet not mine neither: from thee they came, / And must return" ("The Dedication" 5), which is quite a different perspective than Carey's when she states "But if I give *my all* to thee" ("Wretten by me

att the same tyme...” 5, italics mine) without ever negating her stipulation of sole possession over her children.

Donne likewise portrays his texts as children which signify his deep investment in these writings, his offerings to God. In a dedicatory epistle prefacing his “Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions,” Donne identifies that this text, “This child of mine, this Booke, comes into the world from mee, and with me” (421). Though it would seem that Donne is thus proclaiming his autonomy and ownership over this “child” as Carey does with the souls of her literal children, Donne also states that this birth of his book is caused by his recovery from a sickness, a recovery instigated by God, and he is therefore in this book “borne a Father.” The autonomy that fatherhood offers him in proclaiming the text’s production as his own is subverted by the idea that this fatherhood is simultaneously his own birth in his recovery from a grave illness. The metaphorical birth of his recovery was fathered by God, therefore implying that the book-as-child is possible only from God’s actions.

God’s actions are indeed recognized by Carey as those which she must submit to, yet she derives authority from her body’s ability to birth children which allows her to negotiate that surrender and construct her relationship to God’s word with more agency than Donne, Herbert, or female prophets display in their texts and messages. Even though she uses her body differently, Carey adopts the characteristic of strong lines common to metaphysical poets, especially the sexually passionate and disorienting language Herbert and Donne use. And though Carey uses similar tropes to defend how she speaks to and

for God just as female prophets like Trapnel, Poole, Channel and Davies, Carey does not use the imagery of children as another defense against those who would accuse her of rebuking her necessary role as mother and wife and deny the legitimacy of her portrayal of her relationship with God. Instead, Carey uses the imagery of children as literal representations of the material which she uses to establish and sustain her authority, not passivity, in a discourse with the divine.

Carey's reciprocal relationship with God, which she takes an active part in defining and shaping through the rhetoric of her text, is a relationship based on her body's performance and success in birthing children. Though she uses strong lines and imagery reminiscent of Donne and Herbert, Carey uses such techniques and figures to develop and sustain a level of autonomy in shaping her discourse with the divine which her male predecessors avoid. And though Carey's ability of speaking to and for God align her with female prophets of the mid seventeenth century in that such speech necessitated the deployment of defensive tropes to excuse their bodies' actions, Carey's presentation of her authority in a discourse with God surpasses that which such visionaries depict. Carey's diary serves as the literal embodiment of a woman strategically using her body to converse with God in her text. God speaks with his rod as Carey replies with her womb, and ultimately such a dialogue diminishes the boundaries of the physical world and the spiritual realm which Carey sought to negotiate herself between.

Notes

1. See L.E. Semler, "Creative Adoption in Eliza's Babes (1652): Puritan Refigurations of Sibbes, Herrick, and Herbert," Centered on the Word: Literature, Scripture, and the Tutor-Stuart Middle Way, eds. Daniel W. Doerksen and Christopher Hodgkins (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004) 319-345.
2. See Patricia Demers, Women's Writing in English: Early Modern Writing (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 165 and 205; Sidney L. Sondergard, Sharpening Her Pen: Strategies of Violence by Early Modern English Women Writers (London: Associated University Presses, 2002) 135-136.
3. For an analysis of multiple biblical tropes used by writers of the seventeenth century religious lyric, see Barbara Lewalski, Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth Century Religious Lyric (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1979) 86-110. Carey frequently uses, among others, the tropes of Christian warfare, the heart synecdoche, and the Christian as branch/tree/vine.
4. I am indebted to Dr. Christopher Hodgkins for bringing this metaphor to my attention.
5. See Frances Dolan, "Marian Devotion and Maternal Authority in Seventeenth Century England," Maternal Measures: Figuring Caregiving in the Early Modern Period, eds. Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000) for a discussion of specific early modern women who undertook to emulate the Marian model. Dolan's discussion of The Widdowes Mite, a 1619 treatise which describes Mary as an "elevated instrument" and which, according to Dolan, provides the figure of Mary with "some efficacy," (286) gives insight into early modern perspectives of women's agency.
6. Lewalski 101-103.
7. I am indebted to Dr. Michelle Dowd for this observation of Carey's structure.
8. See Patricia Crawford, Women and Religion in England, 1500- 1720 (New York: Routledge, 1993) 106. Crawford cites that from 1640-1660 prophesy in England increased dramatically with over 300 women actively prophesying during this period and states that widespread social and religious disorder during that time was inductive to such an increase.
9. See Semler 319 for a brief discussion of how the anonymous author of Eliza's Babes identifies her texts as children begotten from the mystical marriage metaphor.

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- - - "Wretten by me at the death of my 4th sonne and 5th Child Perigrene Payer." Greer, 157.
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